THE

SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON

A Story



BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF
"BELLA DONNA,"
"NEVER FORGOTTEN,"
"JENNY BELL,"
ETC. ETC.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY.
1875.

CONTENTS.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE TWO PASSENGERS	1
II.	THE WHITE HART	6
III.	THE BROWN ROOM	9
IV.	A STORMY CONSULTATION	13
V.	THE CATHEDRAL	19
VI.	AFTER THE DEAN'S SERMON	23
VII.	IN THE DINING-ROOM	25
VIII.	IN THE DRAWING-ROOM	27
IX.	ST. CECILIA AT THE ORGAN	32
X.	THE ASSIZES	40
XI.	ROSS V. DAVIS	43
XII.	THE VERDICT	52
XIII.	THE DEAN'S PARTY	56

BOOK THE SECOND.

I.	THE CAPTAIN'S NIECES	63
II.	MR. TILLOTSON'S HOME	69
III.	MORE ABOUT THE CAPTAIN	72
IV.	THE CAPTAIN'S NEW "MENAGE"	76
V.	A NEW INTEREST	79
VI.	THE END OF A LOVE	83
VII.	ILLNESS	89
VIII.	AN EXPEDITION	98
IX.	A PROPOSAL	104
X.	THE CAPTAIN'S SCHEME	110
XI.	GREAT PROSPECTS FOR MR. TILNEY	116
XII.	A GLEAM OF HOPE	125
XIII.	MR. TILNEY'S LAST STAKE	140
XIV.	A MARRIAGE	145

CONTENTS.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	FIRST DOUBTS	153
II.	THE COURT OF APPEAL	162
III.	TROUBLES IN THE HOUSE	169
IV.	A NEW PROJECT	177
V.	THE CAPTAIN ON HIS TRAVELS	182
VI.	THE POOR FOOLISH LITTLE THING	188
VII.	THE CAPTAIN'S STORY	192

BOOK THE FOURTH.

I.	A VISIT FROM MR. TILNEY	198
II.	LIGHT AND HAPPINESS	205
III.	THE CAPTAIN'S VISITOR	214
IV.	THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON	219
V.	THE CAPTAIN	225
VI.	THE RETURN	228
VII.	A VISIT	230
VIII.	MR. TILNEY GIVES COMFORT	237
IX.	MRS. TILLOTSON'S FIRST DINNER	242
X.	A MEETING	252
XI.	THE BUNNETT BALL	260
XII.	THE APPEAL TO THE LORDS	265
XIII.	COUNSEL WITH THE CAPTAIN	271
XIV.	GATHERING PROOFS	276
XV.	A REVELATION	281
XVI.	THE CAPTAIN HELPS	291
XVII.	AT MISS BELLMAN'S MATINEE	295
XVIII.	CONFUSION	300
XIX.	MR. TILNEY SERVES THE BANK	304
XX.	THE FONCIER TOTTERS	313
XXI.	A WEARY NIGHT	320
XXII.	ROSS	334
XXIII.	HOME AGAIN	339
XXIV.	RETURN TO ST. ALAN'S	342
XXV.	MR. TILLOTSON FINDS REST	345
	L' ENVOI	351

THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO PASSENGERS.

This story begins at a very every-day scene—at a railway station, with the train setting off, and cabs arriving at precisely the last minute. In one of these cabs, the gentleman who is to be the hero of the story comes driving up very late, and, indeed, seems wholly indifferent as to whether he "*had* run it a little fine" (the encouragement of the porter who had secured him and "brought him through"), or should have to wait two hours more for another train. It seemed all one to him.

This evening train should leave the station at three thirty, and it was now three thirty-five. Not being one of the "expresses" which are always breaking away up and down the line, but a sober, provincial, old-fashioned train, which ambled on from station to station, it was treated by the officials with the sort of unceremonious respect they kept for old ladies with baskets, who delayed them with questions. It was not very full. As it "toddled" out of the station, there was indeed seen, in one carriage or two, a row of hats and heads bent down over evening papers, like a class at school; but other compartments glided by—mere empty cells—and one with a lonely gentleman all to himself, who had bought half-a-dozen papers, which lay unfolded beside him on the seat.

This gentleman had a white ticket for St. Alans in a leather-bag beside him. He was about five-and-thirty—but looked more—was spare without being thin, pale without being colourless, thoughtful without looking a hermit or recluse, and had a half-dreamy air that was agreeable and not absurd. The morocco-bag had initials on it—"H. C.," and inside the morocco-bag were note-books and pocket-books, a volume of Boswell's Johnson, with a name on the title-page, which was in a bold firm hand, and read "Henry Graves Tillotson."

Henry Graves Tillotson looked quickly from one window to

the other as the "dowdy" train jerked over intersecting rails, and glided by the huge rambling boarding-houses where engines "bait" or board, and the surgeries and hospitals where they are taken in and have their wounds dressed. He looked up at the men in the round tops, half-way up great masts of trees, who, with strange instruments and levers, exercised some mysterious influence on his own motion. He turned listlessly from side to side, and saw the "backs" of factories, the store-houses and yards of timber, which were "fining" off into rows of houses, then again into rows of villas, and then later into detached houses, until the trees and green fields began to spread out and have it all their own way. By which time the old lady who was carrying him was "getting her stride," and hurrying along at a respectable pace. Then Mr. Tillotson gave a sort of sigh, overcome perhaps by this utter solitude. Yet he had selected this lonely cell purposely. He looked over at his evening papers absently, but did not take up a single one to read. He cared very little for the meeting of the emperors at Kirchwasser—or for the actual text of the last "Note;" or even for the accident in Piccadilly "This Day;" which were the leading items of telegraphic news. And thus for some hours the stations came and went one after the other, and their names were shouted, and brought with them a dropping fire of doors.

Once, indeed, a young girl in "a hat," with her mamma, were put in at a station. The mamma had many packages and parcels —sets of novels tied up with string—and seemed, indeed, to have newly come from a fair, laden with merchandise She hardly spoke a word, but was anxiously counting her treasures, and never getting her calculation right. The young girl sat opposite to Mr. Tillotson, and studied him with furtive eyes for the twenty minutes between the two stations. There is some little romance in this sort of travelling, when at night in the blue chamber, under the dull lamps two or three companions come in and sit for half an hour and we see their faces, and perhaps talk with them and feel a sort of interest in them, catching even a hint or glimpse of the far-off drawing-room or fireside, to which the carriage waiting in the dark at the foot of the steps, with lamps flashing, will carry them. Then they are gone, saying "Good-night," and before morning we are a hundred miles away, and know it is all but certain we shall never see them again.

This young girl talked over their tea-table of the sad-looking gentleman who was with them in the carriage. "Such an interesting face, papa," she said; "just as if he had suffered a great deal. I am sure he had just lost his wife."

"I never noticed him at all, dear," said her mamma. No more she had.

"And sometimes I heard him sigh," the girl went on. "And his eyes were so soft. I am sure it was his wife, papa."

"Something wrong in trade," interjected papa, from his newspaper.

"No, no," said she. "I am sure not *that*. He had no bushy whiskers, or anything of that sort. Oh, it was the most *curiously* interesting face."

The young girl, who never met that face again, was right. For in him there *was* this strange expression of interest which attracted every one, more or less.

Mr. Tillotson, who by some accident contrived to keep his privacy, was "visited" in due course, and required to show his papers. This process repeated itself until the darkness was well set in, and the journey nearly done, and lamps flashed into the carriage at a station about ten miles from St. Alans. There the door was opened, and some one with a gilt-headed cane got in. This was a short narrow gentleman, in a coat that seemed well made, some thirty years ago, and a tall hat that was fixed stiffly on his head; and under the brim of the hat a very pink and rugged Roman nose. The new gentleman looked from one dark window-pane to the other, and danced his gilt-headed stick up and down between his knees. He at last spoke, leaning over on his elbow on the cushion, as if reposing on an ottoman:

"Come down from town, I suppose? Any news up there when you left?"

Mr. Tillotson looked up absently from his book, said "he had not heard," then handed over his unopened bundle of papers.

"Ah, yes," said the gentleman, feeling about his waistcoat for something. "Evening papers, I see. Did not bring my glasses. I find this sort of light, you know, ruins the eyes. I never read by it—never. When I was once quartered at Walmer, lots of years ago now, I was left for a week by myself without a soul, Sir, to play piquet with; and so I was *driven in* upon reading, and that sort of thing, and read so hard, Sir, that I impaired my sight, Sir,—*im-paired* my sight. That's always the way with young fellows. God Almighty gives us these blessings without our asking for 'em, and we go and abuse 'em. Going on to St. Alans?"

"Yes," said Mr. Tillotson. "We shall be there soon, I suppose?"

"Why, yes. I'm going there too. I live there—have lived there for many, many years, and I suppose, shall die there. Perhaps they'll carry me out to a corner of the cathedral, feet foremost—what we must all, all come to, you know! Dust upon dust. Clay, Sir, that a common fellow will turn up in the fields. How fine all that is in the Service! Yes, I suppose they'll give me a bed there. I know the dean very well—Lord Rooksby's brother."

"Oh, you know St. Alans well?" said Mr. Tillotson, anxiously closing his book.

"Yes; I may say I am a St. Alans man. I was a *boy* there," he added, with a touch of feeling, "what-d'ye-call-'em'd it on the green,

saw the old cathedral every morning, and used to go reg'larly to the anthem. Ah! we were all innocent then, Sir."

"And now," asked Mr. Tillotson, "is it a—a stirring place—I mean as regards business?"

The gentleman smiled. "Well, I suppose it is. Let us say it is. I always stand up for old St. Alans. It's a deadly lively place; but after the hums and storms of life, of which I have seen many, Dick Tilney, Sir, loves it still. By the way, my name is Tilney, Sir. If you are a stranger in old St. Alans, and coming to stay amongst us, I know the place—have its pulse, I may say, between my fingers."

"Thank you—thank you very much. I should, indeed, like to know something about it. I have reasons—perhaps important ones."

"Quite right—oh, quite proper," said the other. "Long, long ago, when I started in life, and was fresher and perhaps more innocent than I am now—though, God Almighty be thanked, I have never lost the early implanted sort o' thing—at my mother's knee, you know—I started as equerry to H. R. H. the Dook of Clarence. You recollect the Sailor King and all that fine time? One of the best of England's line. He always said 'I like a man with reasons, and that can *give* his reasons.'"

"I shall be here, I suppose, for a week," said Mr. Tillotson, "and then——"

"Quite right—oh, quite proper," said the other, making his cane dance. "You will go to the White Hart, of course—an old gentlemanly house, and, let me tell you, that is something in these days of bagmen and snobs. As I have often told Lord Chinnery—a sort of a third cousin, we don't set up to be swells; for be a man an innkeeper, or be he an ostler, or be he a counter-fellow, or be he a—a——" And hesitating here, having exhausted his illustrations, he happily added, "a anything you like; if he behaves *like* a gentleman before his fellows, he *becomes* one, and the noblest work of our common Creator. That's the religion I was brought up in! I have been in St. Alans for ten years now, come weal, come woe," he went on. "I was a boy there, and came back like the hare. I suppose I shall die there. They'll stow me away in the cathedral somewhere. They're always glad to get a gentleman. I keep my family there too, Sir—wife and daughters—pleasant house, good air. No state—none in the world. You know where the White Hart is? Not very far from the bank."

"Yes," cried Mr. Tillotson, a little eagerly, "I have heard of that. Not doing much, I believe? They are old-fashioned and behind the time. They want working up to the new principles."

"No doubt—no doubt," said the other. "New or old, my dear Sir, it's all one to me. I am ashamed to say I am genteel enough *never* to have had a balance *any*where. Can't do it—and can't go about it."

Mr. Tillotson was presently asking many questions about the men

of the place and local matters, and whether it was going back or "coming on," and got curious parti-coloured answers, containing a little of the information he wanted, but all mottled over with references to old days and fine society, and to the late William the Fourth when Dook of Clarence. "Tickets here," he said, interrupting himself. "This is St. Alans. You take a machine here, put the things on the top, and bowl away to the town. Here, George, see to this gentleman's things." And in a moment he was on the platform, stepping here and there with a slight "stiffness,"—and Mr. Tillotson saw this from the narrow back and long legs—and switching the air with his gold-headed cane. "I'll ask you for a seat," said he, "down to the town. These limbs of mine are a little tired, as all limbs are and should be at my stage of life. White Hart, driver!"

It was the ancient old-fashioned English country and county town, in which someway the gaudy host of grocers' shops seem to thrive most and be most conspicuous, and books to have only a feeble, languid, unhealthy existence

"You find us," said Mr. Tilney, as they came down a by-street, "rather in undress. The roughs here must have their politics. The Law—the Law, Sir"—and Mr. Tilney raised his hat as if he were mentioning a sacred name—"the Law has its hold upon us now. The majesty of our constitution—which, if you compare it with that of France, Italy, or any other tropical country—under the blessings of which *we* live, is about to be vindicated. Rich and poor, poor and rich, are all one *there*. The assizes, Sir, will be on in a week or so. The grand inquest will be sworn to-morrow."

"Oh, indeed!" said Mr. Tillotson, absently.

"I *know* it," said Mr. Tilney, as if this abstraction implied doubt "I had it from Wagstaff, the clerk. And a heavy calendar; some heavy cases; and one of extraordinary interest, most singular, in which young Filby, quartered here, and, I am *told*, a second cousin to Lady Frogmore, is mixed up. It will be taken second or third. Then there is another——"

"And what was this affair?" asked Mr. Tillotson, bound to show some curiosity.

"Oh, foolish, foolish! Coming home from the races on a mail phaeton, these young fellows, who, I happen to *know*, are connected with really some of the best houses in the county, began to throw orange-peel about—some say oranges. A grocer, in a small way, and called Duckett, is at his door, and is hit or splashed. Well, now, instead of doing as you or I would, going quietly back to our shops, to our scales and beams, and tea, and that sort of line, Duckett must go and bluster, and naturally young Filby, who is a high-spirited boy (his father, between you and me, went off with a maid of honour, all the papers full of it, but with stars, you know), and the others, of course, give it to him: and the result is, he gets it."

"And he brings an action?"

"And he brings an action. Quite right," said Mr. Tilney. "Our wild relation, Ross, harum-scarum fellow, mixed up in it too, who, by the way, has his hands full enough. Here we are. I'll tell you all about that further on. All about it! Remind me, though. You must take us as you find us," continued Mr. Tilney, apologising for the town. "We shall do better by-and-by. Ah, town is really my place! Town air suits my lungs; but I believe in poor old St. Alans; with all its faults I love it still! Here we are. White Hart. A very good house. Where's Hiscoke?"

CHAPTER II.

THE WHITE HART.

The White Hart was a great old inn, with good connections on all sides. It had a healthy old age, and, until the fatal day when a modern Grand Railway Hotel was to burst into life, would stride on healthily. Just as there are old men the admiration of their friends for their spirit, and who are always described as "hale old men," but one day the hale old man falls in suddenly, and shrinks up like a rotten apple. This inn had great rooms, where the grandfather of the present Lord Rooksby had danced with his contemporaries, and where the same nobleman had dined riotously and held his election committees; where, too, as the Honourable Mr. Ridley, he "fought the battle of the Tories for seven days." Now, the present Lord Rooksby always went up to London to dine, "put in" his son, the young Hon. Ridley, in a morning, without expense, had no generous feeling arising out of the past for the White Hart, and fought no battles for Tories, or any one, indeed, but for himself only and for his family.

When Hiscoke had been found and solemnly charged to take all care of the stranger, Mr. Tillotson asked, hesitatingly, if he would stay and take share of the dinner. Mr. Tilney consented heartily, and was even good enough to order it, taking care that it should be a sort of special dinner in a special room, and with special wine, which he looked after,—with special charges, perhaps, which he did not look after. The special wine, which came up all powdered with sawdust, and was carried tenderly, like a fire-arm that might "go off" at any second, mounted softly into Mr. Tilney's cheeks and Roman features, and coloured them finely. Under the light, now that the stiff hat was off, Mr. Tillotson saw that he was a "youngish" sexagenarian, with very thin hair, and a blue tie speckled over with

"pigeon's eggs," and that his manner, though in company with some oddities, was that of a gentleman. He was pleasant company, and kept up an animated, if not conversation, at least commentary, on life generally—for really that only bounded the range of his subjects.

"After all, one's own fireside," continued Mr. Tilney, "what is there comes near that? You try the one thing and you try t'other thing—the courts and the camps and the what-d'ye-call-'ems—and you come back to it. I am no saint, and, thank God, have never set up to be one; but home, and the smiling affairs, eh?—that is the true charm. You put yourself into that evening train at the call of business, and I dare say were looking back at every station—I don't wonder—a cold night in a railway carriage—after the cheerful hearth and the bright faces? Come now?"

Something like a twitch passed over Mr. Tillotson's face. "I am sorry," he said sadly, "that such a pleasant picture has no existence for me. I have left a fireside indeed behind me, but it is a solitary, *miserable* one, and to that I must return. I have never been married, and see nothing to tempt me ever to marry."

"I *beg* your pardon. Oh, I do, indeed, from my soul," said the other, making a glass of the brown sherry return back to the table when half way on its journey. "I did not mean to touch on any thing sore. I did not, indeed. No, no, God forbid."

"No, no; of course not," said Mr. Tillotson, sadly. "Naturally, how could you know?"

"There it is!" said Mr. Tilney. "Naturally, how should I know? But I ought to have known. Bless me, twenty years ago, when I was with Macgregor and Foley and Billy the middy, as we called him—that is, his late Majesty King William—they would have taught me better than that. Foley, who was major under Paget Dawson, said often and often, 'Dammy, Sir, assume that every man has done something to be ashamed of.'"

But from the date of this discovery of his companion's celibacy Mr. Tilney began to look at his neighbour as if quite another Mr. Tillotson had come to sit down there and was entertaining him with the brown sherry. His manner became softer and more deferential, and he checked his own tendencies to soliloquy to a surprising degree.

"But if you talk of rubs and trials," he went on, "we all catch *them*. Not a doubt of it. Man never can, but always must be, blest—fine line that! God knows I have had my share—struggle, struggle, struggle, toil and trouble, from *that* high," and he put his hand on the seat of a chair beside him. "The very year his Majesty, formerly the Sailor Dook, died, they got me a little place about the palace, a trifling thing; and what d'ye think, before he was a year gone, they took it from me—abolished it, Sir!—was *that*, I ask you, dishonouring his remains? And the dean up there will

tell you in his pulpit this is all good for us! Pooh! Sir, at this moment I might have my hand on the banisters of the palace stairs —I might be sitting in my purple and linen, with the rest of them, instead of," he added bitterly, "fighting the battle of life, Sir, in a damned hole-and-corner place like this!"

Mr. Tillotson answered him gently and impassionately.

"We have all to bear these things—*all*. If it is any comfort to you, you may know that there are many whose miseries are greater, and who would—oh *how joyfully!*—welcome the disappointments of money, and place, and prosperity, in the room of mere agonies of mind and conscience."

Mr. Tilney filled his glass again.

"You put it excellently, my dear Sir, and really with great feeling. But, ah! it is the shock, the wound, the *wound*, Sir. After years of devotion to be cut adrift. It was the unkindness—sometimes of nights it comes on me—just as you describe—at the foot of the bed. Ah, had I courted my Maker, Tillotson, with one three-quarters of the devotion with which I courted my king, He—He" (he paused to recover the quotation)—"He wouldn't have—treated me in this sort of way. No, no, not he." After a pause, "You spoke of business, I think?" Then Mr. Tilney, well back in his chair, with his armpits over the knobs, said, frankly, "Now, what can we do for you? I should be glad to tell you anything and everything."

Mr. Tillotson then disclosed the object of his coming down to that decaying country town. "I dare say you have seen in the *Times* the Foncier Capital Company. They want to work up the country districts. I myself am a director, and very deep in it, as they call it. In short, they are going to have a branch here. There is no need to make a mystery or secret about it, and so I tell you. They will make the experiment, at all events. What do you think of the prospect?"

"Well," said Mr. Tilney, filling out some sherry, "I know nothing about rate of interest, exchange, and that class of thing—I say it above-board—and as to banks, I know the brass shovels by sight, perhaps, and ah! 'How will you have it?'—eh? It's a happy moment, always, getting a spadeful of guineas. Money is one of God Almighty's blessings, let 'em preach against it who like. I have heard Ridley, the dean, harangue against it like a fury, and it's notorious, Sir, the man's as great a miser as there's in the clergy-list. I don't call *that* religion. Uncommon good this: Hiscoke is notorious for his brown particular."

It was now about nine o'clock. Mr. Tilney was growing very communicative, and seemed to punctuate his sentences with sips of brown sherry.

"I am very glad you are come," continued he, his arm still on the round knobs—"very glad. I hope you will stay. We should all like to know you. I tell you what," said Mr. Tilney, prying curi-

ously into the now empty decanter, and feeling that he must forego more of that cordial—"I tell you what: will you come up to my shop and take your tea with my girls, up at the Close? If you will do me that honour, I shall be exceedingly happy. We are in a sort of modest happy-go-lucky way. We don't aim at style or expense, because, as I can tell you, from the ve-ry bottom of my heart, not one of us cares for that sort of thing—not one. We do our little all to fit ourselves to the lot Providence has cast us for. I have only the girls in the world, and their mother. Do come, Tillotson. Don't stand on ceremony; and I tell you, you will make them happy—*all* happy. You will indeed."

Mr. Tilney urged this point with much affection. After a friendship of two or three hours' duration, Mr. Tilney always found his way to a new friend's arm; and as he was elderly, and previously had mainly been talking of life and mortality, this action fell in quite easily and almost gracefully. But he could not prevail with his friend, who shrank away from company.

"Well, then, a stroll. Come now. A little walk to show you the place?"

What with the strong fiery wine of the White Hart, which age had not tempered, and which had maintained the old strength and stimulated the fox-hunting gentry of the real old times, and the low rooms, which were slightly "stuffy," and his journey, Mr. Tillotson felt a headache, and was weary. When, therefore, a gentleman in velveteen, with a whip-handle in one pocket, and heavy buff club-shaped legs, dropped in, and said to Mr. Tilney, "I have heard all about the 'orse Sir," Mr. Tillotson got up, and said he would wait outside.

"Do, do," said the other with fervour. "I'll not be long—not longer than this," he said, tapping the decanter. "The night-air is beautiful. Go on quietly towards the cathedral,—any one will tell you the way,—and I'll be after you."

CHAPTER III.

THE BROWN ROOM.

Mr. Tillotson went out slowly—slowly through some narrow streets, and he did not care to ask the way, as he had been directed; for every now and again he had a glimpse of a gigantic signal before him which solemnly showed him the road—the huge cathedral spire; and at the base of one of the great long windows was a faint light,

where workmen were busy—just as though it were a lantern held out to him from a distance. Through some narrow old streets he went slowly towards it, until he suddenly heard voices, and noise, and confusion, and round the next corner came upon a scuffle—with hats tumbling along the road, a scramble, and scraping of shoes, and three young men struggling with another, who was in the midst of them, with his coat torn from his back.

"Give it to him!" "Serve him right!" "Low beggar!" "Good lesson!" "Hit him hard, Filby!" "Screw his eyes out!"

One of the gentlemen had a light cane, and was scourging the victim soundly. The others seemed to be kicking him where they could. Some women stood with their babies at the doors, and one called out for help feebly.

Mr. Tillotson paused a moment. He saw that this was more than a street scuffle; and, without pausing a moment, he walked up quietly to them, and in a second had dragged away the single victim from his persecutors. According to the usual formula, they stood panting a moment, then turned on him.

Mr. Tillotson said, quietly, "Three upon one! Surely you are Englishmen, and can give Englishmen fair play?"

"He deserves it, and more!" said one of the combatants, a little excitedly. "A wretched spy of a grocer! He's not had half enough!"

"I'll have the law of you all," said the victim, a little round man, adjusting his torn coat. "I know your names: you, Filby, and you, Ross. Mind, when I get you before the jury, see if I don't——"

Suddenly one of the most inflamed of the three burst out:

"And are you going to let this *bagman* interfere with you? *Confound* you, what do you mean by meddling with gentlemen? I'll give you a lesson, if they won't."

He sprang round actively to the other side of Mr. Tillotson with a light cane raised. But in an instant the light cane was twisted out of his hand, and was broken in two by a smart blow, which Mr. Tillotson meant for his shoulder, but which fell upon his cheek.

"There, there," said his friends, "that's enough. Let the grocer go, and have done with him. Come home to barracks."

The last combatant had his hand up to his cheek to hide something, and seemed quite routed. Mr. Tillotson saw something like blood through his fingers.

"You are not much hurt," he said. "I did not mean——"

"Curse you, you did though!" said the other. "You aimed at my face, like a shabby sneaking fellow.—Don't hold me, I tell you! Where is he? Let me go at him!"

"Come away, do, now. That grocer has gone for a watchman. Come." And the friends, in spite of all his struggling, took him each by an arm and hurried him off.

Mr. Tillotson looked after them a moment. "This is just life

with me," he thought bitterly—"life all over. I look for peace, and never can find it. Even in a wretched place like this, at the back of God speed, in a wretched street, I am dragged into a mean scuffle of this sort. A low street row, above all! That old vile enemy will come up—will haunt me!"

He heard a cheerful step behind him, and saw Mr. Tilney coming up in the moonlight, with his stick swinging round like a catherine-wheel.

"God bless me!" he said, "what an eye for geography you have! Now that's just like Tom Ventnor, who was always hanging about the palace wanting a 'stole,' or a gentleman-at-arms, or, in fact, anything they would give him. Tom Ventnor all the world over! Put Tom down in Paris or Dresden, Stafford or Gloucester, or Berlin, or New York, or Vienna, or—or—Colney Hatch," added Mr. Tilney, embarrassed by having got to the end of all the capitals he recollected, "and he could walk about anywhere, anywhere."

They walked on through the town. The grocers' shops were still in splendour. They passed an open market-place, where there was a statue in a frock-coat. "One of England's gentlemen," said Mr. Tilney, stopping to wave his stick at him as if he was making an incantation, "who lived as he died! That man, to my knowledge, never did a dirty action. It was one of the most pleasing ceremonies I ever saw in the whole course of my life when Lord Monboddo laid the first stone. Ridley, the dean, behaved like a gentleman for once in his life, and prayed over the bronze in good style. Chinnery, my cousin, came down here for it—all the way from Chinnery."

Then they got under a gateway, and entered on a soft quiet common, fringed about on one side with ancient detached houses of brick and stone, and of different heights; while on the other rose the cathedral, tall, firm, solid, like a rock out of the sea. The grass was between.

"There it is," said Mr. Tilney, flourishing with his stick. "I have forgotten all my poetry and Georgics, though I *was* brought up at Rugby, with Stamer and Hodgson, and the rest. Ah! it sticks to me yet, Sir, to see that. It is a fine thing, and a noble thing; and it speaks to me. Who is the fellow that says that a nigger—a common nigger that you see with wool like a bit of ticking stuck on his head—is th' Almighty's image cut out of a lump o' coal? Grand, that. Well, that building, Sir, seems to me th' Almighty's image cut out of pure Portland or Scotch stone—I'm not sure which. I should be ashamed if my whole heart had got so seared and knocked about, if it hadn't a corner left for a grand thought like that!"

Mr. Tillotson actually heard his voice quaver and tremble a little. Could he have seen Mr. Tilney's face, he would have noticed that his eyes were really moistened. Indeed, after brown sherry, his friends always noticed this tendency to topics of sensibility.

They were now back at the hotel. "Well, here we are," said Mr. Tilney. "This is the way we come and go. Wait; I'll go in and see what they have done with you. Where have you put Mr. Tillotson, James?"

"In the Brown Room, Sir. There's a fire lighting there."

"Ah, dear, dear! So it is! Old Sir John Mackintosh, *he* slept there. (She was one of the *finest* women, Tillotson, that you would pick out. You couldn't go beyond her!) I know the road, Tillotson. This way."

They went up through many passages, till they got to this large but low square room, with faded paper, and a faded red-cushioned bedstead, with limp curtains fast drawn, which nodded when anyone walked across the room. It seemed as stately as the Baldequino in St. Peter's at Rome. Mr. Tilney got his legs across a chair in a riding attitude, yet without any intention of moving. Suddenly he started. "My goodness, I declare, so it is! The very room. Wonderful indeed. There's not a sparrow falls, you know. Just ring and ask the waiter if I am not right."

"How do you mean?" said Mr. Tillotson, wearily.

"My dear friend," said Mr. Tilney, getting off his horse, "how curious! This is the very chamber where Tom Major shot old General Macarthy, at one o'clock in the morning—just as I might crack this lump of coal here."

Mr. Tilney was seeking this reminiscence in the coals with such infinite relish, that he did not see that this sudden piece of news made Mr. Tillotson fall back against the curtains of the bed as if he had been stricken; neither did he hear his murmured "Great Heaven!"

"This very room," he went on, beating the coals abstractedly, "I was brought in when a mere lad, the very morning after. And they had the poor old general on a bed. But, mind you, brought it all on himself—couldn't command himself; and Tom, who belonged to one of the best families, could not well pass it over. Tom got away to Boulogne in time. Dear me! Tillotson, my dear friend, I beg your pardon; I do indeed. I forgot. Traveller, and all that. You look pulled down someway. We must get up flesh here—and here. There is One above who gives and who takes away! Heaven, in its infinite bounty, bless you! After all, we have every reason to be thankful when we think of——"

With this he at last took his leave, and went away. As soon as he had gone, Mr. Tillotson, as it were shrinking away from the room, rang for the waiter. "Get me another room," he said.

With amazement the waiter murmured, "But this is the Brown Room, Sir. Lord Llanberis, Sir, always——"

"I don't care," said Mr. Tillotson, impatiently. "Get me a smaller room—one lower down, and not so lonely."

"But the fire, Sir; the housemaids are gone to bed."

"Never mind the fire."

The waiter went to get ready another room, murmuring to himself that this was a queer, "ill-edicated 'feller,'" and in a short time had a smaller mouldy apartment, with also a catafalque bed, quite ready; and there Mr. Tillotson slept a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

A STORMY CONSULTATION.

On the following morning, when the sun was well up and making the little town glitter in all its points and angles, and when the boots was telling the chambermaid, with whom he was most intimate, how the "gent," who was above, "'ad been turning up his nose" at the best room in "the 'ouse," Mr. Tilney came "swinging" in, bright as the very morning itself. He found that his friend had gone out some time, but was to be back shortly. It was agreed that about four o'clock Mr. Tilney should come again, seize on his friend, and bear him off to visit the Tilney family. And at four he did come, and Mr. Tillotson wearily let himself be led away.

"This is our little nook," said Mr. Tilney, stopping to open a wooden gate. "Nothing very pretentious, you see." It was an old grey stone house of two stories high, with the centre portion projecting beyond the rest. The windows were open, and sounds of voices came from within. But Mr. Tillotson drew back. "It seems there are people here, and I really am not——" But Mr. Tilney had on his overpowering agricultural manner in a moment. The other submitted, though his heart sank at the notion of society.

There was a little glass hall in front of the hall-door, with seats and a few plants. The hall-door was always open. As they entered, Mr. Tillotson himself drew back mysteriously. "I declare," he said, "I don't know that voice."

There was a faded lady and two daughters and two gentlemen sitting there. The gentleman whose voice Mr. Tilney did not know was still speaking, nor did he stop when they entered. He continued noisily:

"The whole thing is outrageous. I come down here by appointment, and Mr. Dawkins here comes down here by appointment, and —you see! His own interests are at stake, *our* interests are at stake. But he does not care. It is weak, immoral—grossly immoral—and," he added, "clinching" the matter, "grossly unbusinesslike."

"Our time is very valuable," said Mr. Cater. "But there are people who do not seem to think so."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Tilney, in a loud voice. "And where *is* Ross? Has he been found? Has he been sent for? Let him be sought for round the town."

"I come down here," said Mr. Cater, in a loud voice, "at great personal inconvenience; so does Mr. Dawkins. It is very strange conduct, very. I was led into the suit by misrepresentation. I pursued it with but one view—that of a fair and profitable compromise. The other side offers that now; and yet this wrong-headed, this insane young man, declines. But I shall insist on it," added Mr. Cater, with great heat.

"We shall be beaten like hacks if we go on," said his colleague.

During this discussion Mr. Tillotson, standing irresolutely at the door, turned several times to go, but was firmly restrained by the hand of Mr. Tilney being laid upon his arm in a mysterious and meaning manner. Now he spoke, and to Mrs. Tilney.

"Mr. Tillotson, my dear," said Mr. Tilney, hastily introducing him. "Sit down there, next to Mrs. Tilney.

"I shall withdraw from the thing," went on the solicitor; "my mind is made up—unless terms are come to; such handsome terms offered, too. Why, it's next to insanity! It *is* insanity!"

"You may say that," said Mr. Tilney, shaking his head. "Why, I recollect when one of the Dook's own tradesmen—a saddler fellow—sent in his bill, why, I declare"—here Mr. Tilney interrupted himself, and put the hollow of his hand to his ear with great caution, as if it were a sea-shell—"there he is. I know his step. Yes; it's Ross."

"Ah, well," said the solicitor, half satisfied, "this is something better. But if he don't settle——"

The door was opened sharply, and a young man entered roughly; a young man with great tossed brown hair, and a nose with a very high strong ridge, and an angry, if not habitually sulky, expression. He had his hand up to the side of his cheek, and he stood with his other hand on the door, looking round on the crowd of people.

"Well," he said, "what is all this conventicle? What's to do? So you've come down, Cater?—and Dawkins, too! I told you you might come if you liked, but it's no use."

Mr. Tillotson was looking at him earnestly; so earnestly, that the young man took notice of him, then started a little, and fixed a dogged defiant challenging look on him. Mr. Tilney strode up hastily.

"Let me introduce. Old Sam Lefevre always said, 'In God's name, let us know our company, and have done with it.' Mr. Tillotson, Mr. Ross. God bless me, Ross, my boy, what's wrong with your cheek?"

"What's wrong?" said the other, angrily, putting down his hand.

"Who said there was anything wrong? There, look, all of you! A great sight, isn't it? I suppose a man can fall down and cut himself, or a boy in the street throw a stone? Ah, but if I catch that boy again, won't I scourge him!"

"Good Heavens!" cried the girls, "what *is* it? You are dreadfully hurt!" And indeed he appeared to be, for there was a great purple line running along his cheek up to his ear.

He gave them a look of anger. "Never mind me," he said; "isn't there business going on here? What are women doing here? Just leave us alone. That's all."

"I am sorry," said the solicitor, "but we must go into this at once. As I wrote to you, a compromise is offered in your case, now ripe for trial at the present assizes. Mr. Bacon was with me this morning. He offers to share the lands in dispute; that will give over a thousand a-year to each party. What on earth drives them to propose such a thing, I cannot conceive. They must be mad! Mr. Paget, our junior, thinks so too. We have not a stick or a leg to go upon."

"That was what Mr. Paget said in our office; his very words," added Mr. Dawkins.

"Oh! of course we'll settle?" asked Mr. Cater, a little nervously.

"Oh, of *course*," said Mr. Tilney. "A thousand a-year! My goodness! A thousand! It is noble. Of course he will."

"Of *course* I will!" said Mr. Ross, ironically. "Oh, you seem to make up the thing readily enough among you. Then of course I won't. My mind's made up; and whether I live or die, whether I am assaulted by ruffians in the street or no, I'll fight the thing out to the last. You, attorneys! Why, you don't know your own trade! Why would they be so eager to compromise? Don't you see the confession of weakness? I *shall* go on! I'll fight them till I drop, or go to a jail! I'll have every shilling, or not a shilling in the world!"

"Then," said Mr. Cater, starting up. "Then you'll go on by yourself, Sir, and you'll settle with me, Sir, at once, and get another solicitor. I'll risk no more for such a madman. Confession of weakness! Why, Mr. Paget told us the reason. Why, you know the defendant is a young orphan girl, who wants no law. But take your own course, Sir."

At this moment, with the young man standing up, his eyes hot, his cheeks glowing, and the ugly scar looking as if it were about to burst open from the force of the angry blood within,—with the two solicitors scowling legally at him with set lips,—with Mrs. Tilney and her family rustling their dresses from "flouncing" indignantly in their chairs,—the door opened softly, and what seemed to Mr. Tillotson a vision, a divine spirit of peace and soft tranquillity, seemed to glide in to compose these angry elements. She stood a moment with

her hand on the door, brought with her silence and stillness, and a converging of all the angry faces on her. Wonderful wavy hair, nearly the shade of gold, which ran and rippled in countless tiny hills and valleys, and gave a rich look of detail and garnish; below, a soft transparent skin, with the dreamiest eyes, a small mouth, and an almost heart-shaped face. At this was Mr. Tillotson looking over from his chair with a strange attraction.

The solicitors half rose in obedience to the spell. Though the dresses of the mamma and the two sisters ran a sort of rustle of impatience, which, to say the truth, was almost instinctive. She glided over to Ross, and laying her hand on his arm, said in a low whisper, which everyone heard:

"Do, ah! do be advised, dear William. Listen to your friends, and to those who know your interests best. Do; oh, do!" And she looked up into his face with a calm devotional entreaty.

He set himself free impatiently. "So *you* must come with the rest! One of the wise women that know law, I suppose, and know the world as well as any of these professionals. Now see here! a word in time. Just go away."

"Before it is too late," she went on. "Think of it, William. Ah," she added, in the same half whisper, "what is this? You are hurt."

(The lawyers, set free now from the spell of that sudden entry, had begun to talk again. So what she said was unheard, except by Mr. Tillotson.)

"How did you get this?" he heard her say a little impatiently. "Ah! you have been in some quarrel. I know it. This old unhappy story. Will you *never* have done with it?"

"Never. No questioning, please," he answered. "And I tell you what;" his eyes began to flame and shoot sparks over to Mr. Tillotson, and his breathing to grow hard; "I'll have a satisfaction in finding out the fellow that did it. It'll be the worst job for him in his trade this many a day."

Her eyes quickly followed the savage direction of his. A sort of light seemed to fill her face as she saw Mr. Tillotson. Mr. Tilney, who had been hovering about uneasily, seized the opening eagerly, to divert his guest from their domestic concerns.

"Mr. Tillotson, my *dear*—gentleman from town, stopping at the White Hart. Most unfortunate this. Came in at a very awkward moment. The Dook used to talk about washing our fine linen in private, and upon my soul I believe it is always the best course."

"I *am* sorry to have come in at such a moment," said Mr. Tillotson to *her*; "and indeed, I wished to go away long since. Perhaps I had better go even now."

She answered him with a kindly eagerness.

"No, no," she said; "stay. You will know our little troubles soon enough. Even now;" her placid eyes looked round with a little

caution, and then dropped on the ground as she spoke, but Ross was again speaking low to the lawyers; "even now, you, who have been here but one hour, have learned some of our ways—ways that no teaching, no experience will mend."

Mr. Tillotson's pale face began to colour. "How?" he said.

"Ah, you understand, I see! I can admire your restraint and calmness; but such lessons are only thrown away on some."

She said this with a melancholy that made her, to his eyes, more like a saint than any of the famous pictures and images by divine and devout men that he had seen as he travelled. In that private interview—for it was private, with the storm of voices raging about them—there seemed to have been much spoken, though not in words; the golden threads of sympathy had been joined between them.

"Do you stay here long?" she went on hastily, and turning to look out of the window. "Then they must show you the cathedral. Look at it, opposite. Oh, if you do, make me a promise! I am ashamed to speak so, after only a few seconds of acquaintance; but you will forgive and excuse me. I know what all this means—I can guess what has taken place between you and him. Do not mind him. He has been brought up strangely. We all give way to him. We all humour him. He is worried and harassed and troubled. Will you promise me?"

Her face fell into such a sweet, soft, imploring expression of devotion, that no one could have resisted. But Mr. Tillotson only answered:

"I quarrel! Indeed, no! Certainly, I promise. Did you know what my life has been, you would indeed say that you might trust me."

Again the solicitor came back to his point, but on a soft and persuasive "tack." "Surely, Mr. Ross, a sensible long-headed man of the world like you will listen to reason. Come now. What can you have to go upon? Surely he ought to know your interest; they are ours, are they not? We are in the same boat, are we not?"

"Same boat! Speak for yourself, attorney, and row for yourself. Same boat! *I* know what I am at," said Ross. "I can see through a wall where another man couldn't find room to put a stone. I've made my plans."

"He is thinking of that ridiculous wild-goose chase on which that Grainger set off," said Mrs. Tilney, flouncing and tossing. "Hunting up a witness! It is mere childish folly; a ridiculous will-o'-the-wisp."

"And *you* know much about it, Ma'am!" said Ross. "Stick to your ribbons and laces. You're a find hand at advice. As for Grainger, he has a longer head than all of them put together."

"Sir! Mr. Ross!" said the solicitor, starting.

"Yes," said Ross, "I *am* waiting for him. He'll be here; and

witness or no witness, I'll stand by him, and by what he says. He's in the town at this moment, or *should* be."

"Then you will take your own course, Mr. Ross—your own course," said the professional voices. The owners of the professional voices were standing up to go.

"I certainly shall," said Mr. Ross; "and I mean to do so. And you shall take the course I take, Messrs. Cater and Dawkins, unless I am very much mistaken. I should like to see you when I stand up in court, and tell the judge that my solicitors have thrown up my case on the eve of the assizes simply because I wouldn't compromise it. And also when I hand up to his lordship a note showing the speculative character of your professional assistance. No, no, Messrs. Cater and Dawkins. You will think it over, and you will act as your client instructs you. And now, once for all, don't worry me any more. And know all of you by these presents, to use your own jargon, I shall go on and on, and on again, and fight the thing to the death. So long as I have a breath in me, I will. It gives me life and enjoyment. I like playing double or quits. It's my fancy. I've taken this thing up and worked it myself so far, and, if you please, shall work it my own way. So now please tell Mr. Bacon that your client declines all compromise. There. I have an appointment at the barracks now."

He strode out of the room. After a moment's pause: "*That's* sensible," said Mr. Cater. "That's what we may call genteel. There's a nice specimen of the relation that should exist between solicitor and client. But let him go on. Let him take his own course. I wash my hands of the whole thing; that is, of all responsibility," he added. Thus showing that Mr. Ross had stated the indissoluble nature of this relation, and the view the judge would take of it, quite correctly. "Then there is no further reason for our staying. Good-night, good-night. It is very melancholy to see such an exhibition. Even the lesson he seems to have got to-night—for it is plain he has been in some street row—no matter. Good-night to you, ladies. We shall just catch the train." And the two gentlemen went away.

"A thousand per annum," said Mr. Tilney, coming back; "only think of *that*. It seems like a dream a sane man refusing it. It seems quite a dream."

Thus the professional men went away; and the family, as if relieved from a burden, and now disengaged from the practical, turned to Mr. Tillotson. Every face took down its shutters and put its best goods in the window, and Mrs. Tilney promptly repaired the horrible omission of social forms.

CHAPTER V.

THE CATHEDRAL.

THE next morning was a Sunday morning, a day when the flaming grocers' shops abdicated. On that day St. Alaffs was given over to a sort of spiritual sense as marked out by chapters, and deans, and canons, and became wholly cathedral. The shops were closed, the White Hart languished. Nature streamed by various alleys to the cathedral. Of this morning, when Mr. Tillotson turned away from his bedstead—which seemed to nod awfully as the room shook—and looked out of the window, it was a bright day, and the street seemed gay enough. On a "dead" door—for there are dead doors as well as walls—he saw some posters with a bold notice about a Neglected Mariners' Aid Society, for whose exhausted funds the dean, Doctor Ridley, the brother to Lord Rooksby, was to appeal at the cathedral.

Before he had done breakfast, Mr. Tilney had walked in, gay and shining, with his stick. "Looked in early," said he. "Knew you were an early riser, by instinct. Have always been one myself, and so, suppose, shall be, Sir, until they carry old Dick Tilney over yonder, and put him to bed." He made a flourish with his stick towards the quarter of the compass where the cathedral lay. "We are not lively to-day, though. Little to be done. No business, of course. And yet, what *can* you say? After all, one day in the week only to the Creator. When you come to think of it," said Mr. Tilney, apologising for the Sunday, "it's not so much. I don't grudge it. By the way, Ridley preaches to-day—Lord Rooksby's brother, you know—a poor drawler, between you and me. God bless me, when I think of the Chapel Royal, with Lord Henry Grey, who was dean, and I sitting on the bench with the Dook—as near as I am to you—ah, that was something like a service! Between you and me, this is a hole-and-corner of a place, religion and everything."

"But I thought you spoke rather favourably of it last night," said Mr. Tillotson, hesitatingly.

"Perhaps I did," said the other—"most likely I did. It's an ill bird, you know—I was not then speaking with you in confidence, you know. But it is a frightful place for a man that knows better. The men are dreadful "cads," and only for the *poor* girls, whom I am sparing no expense to polish, I'd cut and run to-morrow. It's not fit for a gentleman to live in."

"Wouldn't you take something?" said Mr. Tillotson, looking at the breakfast-things.

"No. Oh," said Mr. Tilney, irresolutely, "it would be far

too early. No, no—better not." (There was here a sort of ellipsis, the omitted part referring to brown sherry.) "Now let us go."

He put his arm through Mr. Tillotson's and led him down the streets. They got to the common, and there, by daylight and by sunlight, Mr. Tillotson saw the long and uneven row of detached houses, each a bit of architecture in its way, where the finer ecclesiastical society had dwelt splendidly a hundred years ago. They did well enough now for small canons. On the other side was the great cathedral, to which lines of people were converging across the common like the lines on an English flag.

"We'll call at the house," said Mr. Tilney, knowingly, "and we can all go in together. Do you know, I like this worshipping of our Maker in common," he added, taking the horizon in with a flourish; "it makes me feel like—the Vicar of Wakefield. One day in the week is all that is asked from us—not more—and it ain't much, Tillotson." These remarks were again all made as if Mr. Tillotson were urging the abrogation of the Sabbath. "Ah! here is the house. Here we are."

It would seem that one of "the girls'" duties was to take life generally in "parties," and to "make up parties" for such things. Nothing could be enjoyed heartily without some combination; if a military one, all the happier. Thus the cathedral service became subject to the same law, and Messrs. Still and Spring of the garrison had been pressed and enjoined, and almost compelled, to perform their Sunday worship under these conditions. These gentlemen were already in attendance. Younghusband, as his friends said, without any reserve, had "fought shy."

The "girls" were in their sacred toilette, the most effective and splendid of their whole series. For the others might be addressed to concert spectators and the persons who came to hear the band; but the cathedral gathered all ages, sexes, and conditions. It was best, therefore, and perhaps only devotional, to be as effective as possible. Their father put it better and more forcibly still, when he said; "Ah! Do we put on our fine clothes for you and me—for the lord-lieutenant of the county, or for the general of the district—and shall we not put them on for the Maker of all?" And with his stick Mr. Tilney pointed towards the ceiling, in the direction of an upper room.

They went to the cathedral along a little cross path in a sort of procession, two and two, each lady with a gentleman. Mr. Tillotson was to have walked with Mrs. Tilney, but by some accident that lady was a little late, and he found himself beside the golden-haired girl of the house.

The shrill speeches of the other girls, whom the continual humour of Mr. Spring and Mr. Still were causing to "die" every moment, were borne back to them.

"They seem to enjoy life so much," said Mr. Tillotson; "they are always laughing."

The girl answered him very softly. "They like life," she said, "and they like laughing."

"*You* do not laugh *quite* so much. Forgive my saying so."

"And yet I don't see why I should not. They all tell me I should be very grateful and happy."

"It is easy to tell our friends that," said he, reflectively. "I have plenty of kind well-meaning people who keep reminding *me* that I ought to be happy."

"But *ought* you not? Mr. Tilney says that you are rich!"

"Rich, of course!" he said, a little bitterly; "that is the elixir that is to cure us of everything. I think I should better bear what I have to bear, if I were poor."

She was growing curious—perhaps even interested.

"You speak," she said, "as if some great trial had visited you. Forgive me for saying so, but even last night I thought I saw——"

"Why not?" said he. "Though I know you but for a short time, I can see that you ask from no idle curiosity."

"No, indeed!"

Mr. Tilney walked all this time on the grass, attached to no one especially, but as the general parent and guardian of all—under the favour of a beneficent Creator. He passed Mr. Tillotson. "Ah, Tillotson! Look, cathedral—you see!"

It was scarcely possible to avoid seeing this great monument, as it stood right in front. To him Mr. Tillotson smiled an answer; to Miss Millwood he said:

"My mother and my father were alive about eight or ten years ago. They were the "best of parents;" not according to the hackneyed form by which every parent is the best of his kind, but they would have died for me, as I believe I would have died for them. But I was young and foolish—*wicked*, rather; and one day I found they had left me—for ever. He stopped and put his hand to his eyes. "Now you may see," he said, in a moment, "in what way I must look on life."

In a gentler voice, trembling with sympathy: "Oh, I am so sorry—I did not mean, indeed—I feel for you—I," she said, sadly, "have had my miseries, if that be any comfort to you. The only thing left to me is, to look back to a childhood that seems like a dream. One morning I too awoke, and it was all over. Ever since it seems like a succession of dark winter days also. But I have no right to repine."

Full of sympathy, which was growing in him every moment, Mr. Tillotson listened eagerly for more. He did not listen eagerly to much during his life. "Go on," he said, "Miss Milwood. Tell me more, and if——"

Mr. Tilney was beside them. "That Ross, of course, not here.

I suppose hard at work with a short pipe in his mouth at this very moment. Ah! very bad, very bad, Tillotson; I respect a man that keeps up all the established decencies of life. I do indeed. No matter: here we are."

He removed his hat and strode on in front of the rest, what with his height and stick, looking like a social drum-major. As they came under the porch, the organ, touched by Edward Bliss, Mus. Doc. Oxon., was rolling and eddying in great billows up and down the huge hall; the air was trembling and quivering; the great pedals were booming and buzzing up in the clouds. The ladies stole away towards what seemed the back huge wardrobes and cupboards where giants kept their linen, but which was the unavoidable effect of that enclosure which gives the true effect to a cathedral by reducing it to a convenient size. While the ladies took their gentlemen to the choir, Mr. Tilney whispered his friend softly to "come round. They had five minutes yet."

Mr. Tilney stopped a moment and drew back his friend. "Look up," he said, "and take it all in; thrones, dominations, and the rest of them, what are they to this? This endures; *they* pass away, and —where are you? By the way," said Mr. Tilney, suddenly changing the subject, "there are the Tophams. Look, Tillotson; that London built carriage. Most remarkable people. His brother is the Right Honourable Henry Topham—one of the secretaries. And there, you see, they come here to service, like any of us. And I declare to Heaven, Tillotson, I have seen *him*, that overworked man, kneeling in one of the stalls with a Prayer-book in his hand, and listening to one of the *common canons* here, preaching in his regular turn. There they come. *If you like*, I'll introduce you?"

The Tophams had alighted from their carriage, and were crossing the little enclosure to the porch. Doctor Topham strode at the head of his family. He was one of the terrible powers of the place; wore a white tie like the clergyman of the place, though he was only a layman, an ecclesiastical lawyer, vicar-general to the bishop—surrogate, and what not—in short, a pompous sour-looking pluralist of immense influence in the place, from his relation to the secretary.

He was very tall and pompous, and carried his umbrella on his shoulder, as a dragoon would his sabre. He walked in advance of his family, and seemed to approach the door of the cathedral as if it were the door of his own house. Mr. Tilney waited for him a little nervously. "How d'ye do, Tilney?" said the great man, without stopping. "They have not begun inside, I suppose?"

Mr. Tilney was greatly gratified by this cordial notice, and assured him that no such liberty had been taken. "A very proud man," said he, looking after him; "can do what he likes with the government. He is coming to dine with us."

Mr. Tillotson went round to the cold black area, looking up when he was bidden in the direction of the stick, and to the right, and

to the right and the left, when he was invited to do that. But he had seen many foreign cathedrals of reputation and of equal size; seen them glowing with colour, and decoration, and warmth, and crowded from the grand door at the bottom of the nave up to the darker far end, where there was the white cloud and indistinct white figures. But he now saw, instead, the neat marble tablets let into the wall to the memory of the treasurer of the county, with the stone sideboard erected by the sorrowing militia officers to their captain, and various marble ottomans strewn about; among which the old knight, shining like black bronze from the polish of time, lying on his back, with his hands joined in the old way, looked sadly out of place. And presently he heard Dr. Bliss roaring and rumbling; but a faint smothered and suppressed Dr. Bliss, enclosed fast, and playing into an enclosure of wardrobes.

Now was Mr. Tillotson led devoutly and softly into the pew where the family knelt, and placed kneeling upon a hassock, and had a heavy book thrust into his hand, without having even the place found for him. Heads turned round, also bonnets on the heads, to see "who the Tilneys had got with them," besides the officers regularly secured, and who were more or less a drug. The ladies and gentlemen of the town sat in tiers in the oak-stalls, and many a gay bonnet lay humorously beside a "begging griffin."

Now came in the procession, with the angelic boys, the choristers, florid, ascetic, and seraphic; all which shapes of expression were discovered in bass, tenor, and counter-tenor faces. They all scattered to their places with a resigned look, as if they were professionally holy men. Then the service set in, and then the sermon.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER THE DEAN'S SERMON.

As Lord Rooksby's brother came in to his third quarter of an hour, the sun poured down with unusual splendour, and swept across the stalls where the Tilney family sat. Mr. Tillotson saw that Mr. Tilney was asleep, with a fallen jaw and a long gaunt nose; and this moment of fatal unconsciousness betrayed to him Mr. Tilney's real age. The "girls" were wakeful; perhaps studying a row of bonnet-backs on the tier below them. But at the very end the sunlight fell upon a patch of gold almost as gorgeous as the old transparent yellows in the panes high up in the windows; that yellow hair which rested on the pale white forehead and soft com-

posed devotional face, which, with eyes cast down, was accepting the dry ramblings of the confessor who was brother to Lord Rooksby, as if he were St. Augustine or Fénelon.

Mr. Tillotson's devotion was not warm; and often and often his eyes travelled profanely to that "Madonna" face, and his thoughts travelled fast and speculated on it with a strange and a fond interest. Looking back through the cold November days of our life, we stop at some such Sunday mornings as these, when the sun is suffusing everything outside, and our thoughts are as festive as the day—a Christmas or an Easter—and travelling from mere buoyancy far away outside the walls of church or cathedral.

But now Miss Augusta, stooping across her neighbour, was whispering to Mr. Tillotson that Dr. Fugle, the tenor, was going to begin the "Anthem;" and Dr. Bliss, having securely got in his mainsail from the storm, was piping most softly and ravishingly. And Mr. Tillotson saw just opposite to him, at the other side, a round pink face with enormous whiskers, which was now singing out of a little hole at the corner of its mouth; but the face was kept up towards the groining of the roof, and the eyes had a soft and languishing air, as if they were cherubim's eyes. So that Doctor Fugle, as he chanted that his "soul panteth," seemed to be rapt, and to have soared away ecstatically. The sisters looked over at Mr. Tillotson in delight, for this was one of Fugle's best efforts; though, in truth, the seraphim was a rather old seraphim, and he supplied the absence of the higher notes by skilful declamation. Then Dr. Bliss "let go" the ropes and blocks, and the winds rose again, and all the canons, save the bass canons, who ground their organs in an earthly way, were seen celestially rapt, chanting with resignation, with all their eyes upturned to heaven. And then came Bliss again, and the seraphic canons went out languidly in procession, quite indifferent to life after this taste of heavenly communing, and the congregation broke up with alacrity, and poured out of the cathedral.

The family procession, too, came out, with the gentlemen. The ladies were very voluble. "Did you ever hear anything like Dr. Fugle? Such an *exquisite* voice. At that part where he said 'pan—teth—panteth,' I could have cried."

"It was fine," said their father, using his stick with feeling. "I like this sort of thing, I do, now. I feel better for it afterwards. During all the week we may have done this, that, and t'other. God Almighty knows I don't set up for a saint—never did, and never shall. I hate your canting fellows. But when I am sitting there, in that old place of a Sunday morning, with all of us round, worshipping our common Maker, I feel the better for it—all the better for it."

He certainly did feel better, or ought to feel so, considering what Mr. Tillotson had seen of him during the sermon.

"Tillotson," he said, "mind you dine with us! Doctor Topham,

Canby, and one or two more have promised to come, in the kindest way. Only a joint, I give you warning; but done well, my friend. I'll guarantee you that. And prime meat, too. Choose my own, and market for myself. No, no, no. No excuse, my friend."

Mr. Tillotson got away from him, back to the White Hart, under solemn pledges to return at seven o'clock and "cut his mutton." From its windows he ruminated gloomily on the dull streets, which, though clean, looked forlorn and wretched. "Why did I promise to go to this man?" he thought. "I have no business with him, or with such company. I am wholly out of place there." So he was, indeed. "This poor place, too, is not the place for business, I can see that with a glance. They are the dead alive here; much as I am myself. I think I will write to Mr. Tilney, and excuse myself by a headache, and go up to-morrow night."

But he did not write, and he postponed the second resolution altogether. He would see about it, he thought. He then went out into the Sunday town and wandered here and there listlessly, but kept carefully away from the cathedral, where, if found, he knew he would be led away to hear Doctor Fugle once more. The whole place seemed a hundred years behind. The provincial look was on it like a blight.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE DINING-ROOM.

By seven he was at Mr. Tilney's again. That gentleman was in what he pleasantly called his "marriage garment." Messrs. Canby and Still were there, with Ensign Ross, who, Mr. Tilney almost insinuated, had asked himself, adding something about "the table being full." He was looking absently and impatiently out of window. Mr. Tillotson, perhaps, understood his position perfectly, as that of a sensitive, impetuous, proud young man, without the means to purchase tolerance for his pride, impetuosity, and sensitiveness.

A tall heavy man was on the rug with his back to the fire, in a very smooth white tie without a crease, which seemed to be made of cream-laid note-paper. Mr. Tillotson recognised him as Doctor Topham, the ecclesiastical lawyer, and cousin of the Secretary to the Treasury. He sometimes recognised Mr. Tilney in this private unofficial way; and knowing that he had good wines and choice fare, came to him without his state-coach, as it were, without his robes,

and without Mrs. Topham (faintly connected with a nobleman's family).

Mr. Tilney presented his new guest a little nervously.

"How-d'ye-do?" said Dr. Topham; then turned away. "Well, what d'ye suppose they did? Of course the bishop sent the papers to me—advice and opinion, and all that. Had he the power, or had he not? There was the point. Of course he had, as I showed with a stroke of the pen. If I were the bishop, I'd deal with the whole pack of 'em at once; and that fellow Norbury I'd pick out and make an example of."

Here was also the Mr. Grainger whom he had seen with Ross on the first morning. This gentleman attracted his notice very disagreeably, from his soft voice and quiet manner, which fell in so harmoniously with the long, rude, and almost battered face the rather wild eyes, and the "ragged" moustache which hung down over the corners of his mouth like that of a Chinese. Mr. Tilney had expressed a very low moral opinion of this gentleman to his new friend. "Consul, my dear Sir, at Fernando Po; carries on the wild animal and travelling business. After all, we must not trust *every* story," he said as if he was actually combating Mr. Tillotson's harsh view. "Charity is a great deal. A *little* charity. And you know, Tillotson, 'judge not, in that ye may not cast your foot against a stone;'" with which extraordinary quotation from no known version of the sacred text, he went with alacrity to meet his guests.

They went down to dinner, but there was rather a "fastueux" humility in Mr. Tilney's description of the meal as "a plain joint," for the entertainment was choice and small, compact and refined. There was "nice" glass, flowers, and pretty china. The whole had a cool shady look on that sunny day. The military gentlemen got into alacrity and spirits as they saw this feast, which was laid, as it were, in an arbour.

"You must take us as you find us," said Mr. Tilney, "quite in the rough—all in the rough. You must recollect that we are far down in Wiltshire. How many hundred miles is that from Francatelli, or Soyer, or Gunter? But still, one thing, Canby, no gory joints here—no, no, no!"

For a place "all in the rough," so many hundred miles from Francatelli and the other artists, it was indeed surprising. Wine good and cool, fish, fruit, everything. The hearts of the warriors could not but be softened and subdued to that good-humour which is almost akin to love. With his lively talk and bonhomie, Mr. Tilney illustrated the whole as with a garnish. For this (comparatively speaking) child of nature, every dish was a surprise. "Now what have we here? What *shall* we call this? God bless me, so it is! Doctor Topham, this turns out to be something *à la Tartare*. Oysters, I believe. I don't warrant it; but it is likely to be good. Mrs. T. knows something about it, so you must be down on her.

Mate, Jenny." (In a whisper to Mr. Tillotson) "For ten years we have always had a parlour-maid. Infinitely preferable to a heavy drunken creature, that deafens you with his boots. Look at Jenny there; she does uncommon well."

Jenny indeed glided round like velvet, was neat-handed, made no clatter, and with her ribbons and chintz dress, looked almost like a theatre peasant.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE DRAWING-ROOM.

"And now, how did they treat you at the White Hart, Tillotson?" Mr. Tilney called out in a loud voice. "Well, hey? Tell me."

"Oh, excellently," Mr. Tillotson answered absently. "They are very civil indeed."

"So they ought to be," said Mr. Tilney. "Do you know, they gave Tillotson the Brown Room. I knew it at once, a finely proportioned thing. It was really a compliment to Tillotson. He gave it to the princess, when she was on her way to the Dook's, near here, to stay for the cattle-show. Tell us about it, Tillotson."

A little confused, Mr. Tillotson cleared his voice, and said, "The fact is, I did not use it, after all."

"Not use it!" said Mr. Tilney, laying down his knife and fork. "The princess's! You don't tell me that." Mr. Tilney said this with such genuine wonder and sorrow mixed, that the rest of the company turned to look at Mr. Tillotson.

Confused under this observation, he said, "The room was too large and vaulty; a cavern, in fact, and so cold——"

"My God!" said Mr. Tilney, aghast; "but, you know, Lord onboddo always——And where did they put you?"

"In a smaller and more compact place."

"I think I should have changed too, like Mr. Tillotson," said Mr. Grainger, in a low voice.

"So should I," said Ada Millwood.

"So should I," repeated Ross, scornfully, "if I were afraid of ghosts, or had anything on my conscience."

"Goodness! goodness!" said Mr. Tilney, getting abstracted; "it seems only yesterday when the whole hotel rushed in to see the poor old general. Some of us not dressed exactly—ahem: as we are now. About two in the morning—I was only a lad, you know.

A terrible scene, Sir, for one so young. An old man that had served his country, and his grey hairs dabbled in blood."

Miss Millwood turned to Mr. Tillotson, as she saw his hand travel to his forehead in a sort of agony, and also half draw back his chair. Mr. Grainger, from the opposite side, noticed the same thing with a little surprise.

"Very odd indeed," said one of the officers; "was all this a duel?"

"A duel," said Mr. Tilney plaintively. "The old gentleman was testy latterly, had the idea that people said he was past his work. Then there was the young wife, you know. Very unpleasant." (And Mr. Tilney's face fell into all sorts of spasms and violent contortions, that meant to convey, that when the ladies were gone he would enter into satisfactory details). "Must say I always heard he forced it on Tom Major, made him stand up there and then—*viséd* him, as the French say—as it might be you, and then——Most unpleasant thing for the hotel, nearly ruined the business."

After that, Mr. Ross became sulky, and scarcely spoke during dinner. Soon Mr. Tillotson's pale face began to warm up. There was an influence in his manner which brought him to the surface of any conversation, just as in society a man is respected. When the ladies were gone up, his supremacy was confirmed. Mr. Tilney, a man of the world, had a deep respect for "information;" and what was better, so had Dr. Topham. But still the host did not forego his own share.

"Town *is* the place, after all," he said. "Help yourself, Canby; wait—finish that;" and diving down, he brought up tenderly a bottle which he uncorked on a slanting stand. "Dear me! I used to dine with a great man and a good man, no other than H.R.H. the Sailor Dook, and I have often and often seen him do the very thing that I'm doing, with his own hands. Did it uncommon well, too. I never saw so fine an eye and steady a hand for decanting. What about the match, Still?" he continued, as the claret made its last Æolian chant as it entered the decanter.

"Day after to-morrow," said Mr. Still, helping himself. "To be on the green."

"Tillotson! Tillotson!" called out Mr. Tilney, when they were in the drawing-room, "just come here. Come over here. You know I said I would show it to you. Still, look at this. I suppose one of the most curious things you could see."

Still, however, did not come. Augusta had said to him, "It is only an old letter of papa's."

"Look here, Tillotson. His own writing. It was just when she was born. She was christened Augusta after one of the princesses. (Helen is Helen Mecklenburga). And I wrote to H.R.H. the Sailor Dook, as they called him, about giving leave for that sort of thing—at least, to know would they object. I was sitting at breakfast one

morning; *she*," nodding at Mrs. Tilney, "was not quite strong enough to get down as yet—Sir James said in a week she might—when *this* came in, just like any other letter in the world. Here it is." And he kept turning a rather yellow and gilt-edged letter tenderly, as if he expected it to fall to pieces. "You see," holding it up to the light, "his handwriting. Read it. You may. No secrets." And Mr. Tillotson read it. The date had been mysteriously removed, or at least some one had made it as uncertain as possible:

"DEAR TILNEY—Call your child by any name you like. Hope Mrs. T. is well over.

"Yours, WILLIAM.

"I am going to Portsmouth to-morrow.

"W."

"There!" said Mr. Tilney, in admiration. "A prince of the blood, and just like you or I—or anybody else! There was no more conceit in that man, or consciousness of the exalted position which he filled, than there was in that—that—" said Mr. Tilney, puzzled for an illustration, and seizing on the first that offered, "that paper-cutter. Perhaps not so much."

He felt that this was scarcely a happy illustration. So he took back his letter, and folded it up. "He was always doing nice things of this sort," he continued. "I could tell you a hundred like them. When he went, I can—tell—you—Dick Tilney lost his best friend. Augusta was considered, when a child, very like one of the princesses—odd, wasn't it?—and having the same name. That was *very* curious. They are both remarkable girls; always in spirits. Listen now. And yet, naturally, Augusta is serious—*so* serious! Look here, Tillotson," he added, confidentially; "she puts all that on for society, you know. Much rather be melancholy; that is, when I say melancholy, I mean be with her books."

But finally, brown sherry came in, and Mr. Tilney, who seemed to detect its presence by instinct, as camels know when they are near water, woke up and drew up his jaw. He then "tried" it, to see that it was of the sort he wished to put down before his guests.

"Try this," his voice was heard ringing plaintively. "Try this, Still. Help yourself to some of the old tap. Dear, dear. I could tell you about the man from whose cellar I got this. Such a story—in fact, story after story. To-morrow, business—eh, Tillotson? All play and no work makes Jack, you know. No, no," he added, with solemnity, "pleasure first, *then* business, as much as you like."

Not caring to set right this remarkable inversion, Mr. Tillotson excused himself from the cricket, and said, good-night, to all. With the departing military gentlemen, "the girls" and Mrs. Tilney were in a sort of riot of voices and laughing at the humour of the facetious

Canby. The air was filled with female voices: they "died" over and over again. There was such "convulsions," "Oh, mammas!" "For shames!" and a hundred such protests—as it were, half entreaties, half commands, that Major Canby would be merciful, and not go further.

In such a tumult Mr. Tillotson's farewell was not likely to be noticed. Mr. Tilney, in a sorrowful way, was engaged with brown sherry. The golden-haired girl, sad and pensive, was standing at the fire, her face looking down at the grate, her foot on the fender, her dress not a dress but a robe. She looked like one of Ary Scheffer's figures.

"Good-night," said Mr. Tillotson to her. She looked up at him with a trustful gratitude. "I heard you say that you would not go to the cricket to-morrow, and there was that dreadful word, business!"

"Business is life, I begin to believe," he said, smiling sadly.

Mr. Tilney came out with his friend to the gate. The stars were out, the night was tranquil, the great cathedral was sleeping in moonlight.

"After all," Mr. Tilney said, pressing his friend's hand, "*this* is the sort of thing! *After all*, we come back to *this* at the end—like the Ark. I'll walk a bit of the way with you. Dear me, this is the way life goes on, one day after the other, one night after another, until the hearse comes up, Sir, and takes us away. It'll be the same for you, you know, Tillotson, as for me."

"Yes, indeed," said the other, absently, and not meaning to assent specially to this truth. "And the sooner perhaps the best for us all. Does Miss Millwood," he added, a little abruptly, "does she stay with you all the year, or has she a home of her own?"

"Ada, you mean," said Mr. Tilney, stopping in the road. "No, Sir. There," and he pointed back with his stick, "that little abode always so free from grief and care—the Roost, as I may call it, is hers—always will be hers, while there is a stick of furniture together, or a crust, or a scrap of meat, or—or, the cruets on the sideboard."

"I see," said Mr. Tillotson, "as the child of a dear friend——"

"Harry Millwood was, I may say, next door but one to a relation. Sir, I knew every corner and cranny of that man as well as I do you—I mean, as I do my own grandfather—or did, I mean. Living in the palace in that way—he was equerry, you know—they never *would* do anything for him; and yet, upon my soul, I couldn't blame 'em. He broke down, Sir—he had to break down—give the thing up—with a wife and child on him. Had to—to cut. Cut, Sir, under an assumed name, the which rather, you know, gave me a little turn. Come weal, come woe, I like a fellow to stand by the name he took before God in his baptism."

"Well," said Mr. Tillotson, with painful eagerness.

"Well," said Mr. Tilney, "he died. Died," added he, mysteriously looking round, "abroad, in a very odd way. I am not at liberty to mention the circumstances, Tillotson; I am not, indeed. God knows I would keep nothing from you. But I cannot, indeed."

Mr. Tillotson stopped this time. They were at the old grey gateway which is the entrance to the Close, dappled over with other greys, and casting a grotesque shadow on the ground about them. But the moonlight played about their two faces, and Mr. Tillotson's face seemed the palest of the two.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Tilney. "It was as tragic a business—as heart-breaking a thing as you'd see—as you'd see at Drury Lane. I went over to them—I was abroad at the time, but I went over to 'em. Such a state of things! My God! That child in a fever——"

Mr. Tillotson shuddered. "Miss Ada? What a world it is!" he said, in a low voice, "and what miserable guilty creatures we all are!"

"So we all are," repeated Mr. Tilney, as if he was in the cathedral, and leading off the chanting. "Every one of us, Tillotson, prince and peasant. The only thing is, I believe, to hold fast by *that*." And he pointed back over his shoulder to the cathedral, now a good way out of sight. "Ah! all I went through in those days! But the curious thing is, my dear Tillotson, the girl knows nothing of this. Not a word—not a breath, mind."

"What?" said Mr. Tillotson, starting, "nothing about the manner of her father's death?"

"Nothing; she thinks to this hour, at this very moment, that he was carried off by an ague of the country. She herself recovered her senses in about a week after all was happily got over—funeral and all that—and we never told her. What was the use, you know?"

"What a strange story!" said Mr. Tillotson, more to himself than to his friend. "I seemed to read something of the kind in her soft gentle face, a kind of sad, subdued melancholy."

"'Pon my word, yes; and I recollect Tom Harrison—a man of the very best style and connections, you know—making precisely the same remark. 'She's a quiet, nunnish look,' says Tom, who, between you and me, knew pretty well about that sort of thing. Well, here we part, I suppose; you to the right hand, and I to the left. You know there must come one dread day when we must file away right and left. And what our only foundation is, you and I know. Good-night. God bless you! God Almighty bless you, Tillotson! To-morrow at twelve, then—or was it nine? Yes, quite right. Good-night!"

And after Mr. Tillotson was gone he remained a long time at the garden-gate, pensively looking up at what he called "the wonderful works of the Creator." Mr. Tillotson went home as pensively, thinking, perhaps, of one other work, to him almost as wonderful.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. CECILIA AT THE ORGAN.

THE next day passed by. The sun had travelled across the field, and the calm of evening began to set in quickly. The cricketers were busy at their game and fatigued; but the untiring ladies who looked on showed no sign of flagging interest. For them there was no monotony in the spectacle; at least, the succession of gentlemen who came up and amused the Miss Tilneys prevented their taking much heed of the passage of time. Of Mr. Tillotson, absent, dreamy, and silent, they had long since ceased to make any account. About four, he had wandered away unnoticed towards the old cathedral, which, with the enclosed green, and the little Close, and the old-fashioned houses, had begun to have a sort of attraction for him. There had been Service there that day as usual; but it had been a very deserted ritual. And Fugle, the seraphic tenor, had to expend notes, that properly belonged to the cherubim above, on two old ladies and a mildewed ancient, dotted among the lugubrious stalls, and on a tourist who, book in hand, and studying the monuments, looked in curiously at some angelic cry of Fugle's, but cautiously took care not to be imprisoned within the great gates of the choir. When Mr. Tillotson walked among the grass, he heard the billows of the organ still rolling and swelling within. He went in. Bliss was practising above. There was no one else there. His footsteps echoed as through some vast stone grotto. He was quite alone, and walked softly into an oaken stall to listen to Bliss, Musical Doctor, Oxon.

It was a soft, solemn, stalking theme of Bach's, grand, old-fashioned, and piquant, like music in bag-wig and ruffles and square-cut coat—music that ambles on in a solemn canter round and round in a ring, with quaint curvets and backings for any length of time, with a very charming monotony—that finally wakes up into a *grande ronde*, and ends triumphantly, like the last burst of a procession. Mr. Tillotson in his stall, with two comic lions with twisted tails and a paw leaning on a shield on each side of his head, thought of Dr. Bliss and his powers, was wondering whether the dull bricklayer's work of lessons, teaching, and the like, dulled this fine sense of music, and whether this grand power fell into a fatal routine also when he heard the rattle of closing stops and the locking of the organ-doors. Doctor Bliss was going home. He stood out in the middle, looking up at the great gallery; and, as he did so, the organist glided across. But it was not Doctor Bliss. Heavy shadows were floating up among the groined arches; but with a

quick instinct he knew the outline of that figure, and walked up to her quickly and stopped her. By the same instinct she knew him.

"I have been listening," he said, "in that old dark stall—I thought it was Doctor Bliss—and have been delighted."

"He lets me play in the evening sometimes. It is the greatest treat I can have. It is quite a world for me, that noble old organ, with life, fancies, intellect, everything. In its company I forget everything."

"Just as I," he said, "when listening, have forgotten everything in the world too. I have never been what is called musical; but I can follow and understand what I have just heard."

"But there are very few who *are* musical," she said in her serious way, and smoothing down her yellow hair, which rivalled an illuminated patch of amber glass just above. "They are taught instruments and notes; but that is scarcely music." Then she said abruptly: "You have spoken more than once of troubles, and some secret bitterness which is to be irrecoverable. May I speak to you freely? May an inexperienced girl give a little advice?"

"And I shall promise to try and follow it, too," he answered eagerly. "Indeed I shall! Why, near your wisdom ours is all foolishness. Do speak, Miss Millwood."

"You have been so good to me," she went on (and the two figures standing there under the great gallery looked picturesque even to the verger, who had come to lock up, but went away softly, recognising her),—even from the first night when you made me a promise which I had no right to ask of you,—that I *will* speak to you without restraint. If you had some dreadful trouble,—some terrible blight,—why should you sit down under it, or take it with you all through life? Believe me, we should all struggle; and after we have indulged ourselves in a sorrow and repentance, perhaps, for a time,—let it be a long time even,—we should then think of life and its duties. Dear Mr. Tillotson, I do not want to run into what comes from that pulpit there every Sunday; but I myself was once inclined to do as you do—to drag hopelessly through life; but——"

"It is too kind of you," he said excitedly—"too generous; and indeed, if I dare, or if I could, I would carry out what you say, though I shut my ears to the platitudes poured out by others. But you do not know—you *can't* know all, Miss Millwood! Sorrows and troubles! Yes; I were blessed indeed, if all known misfortunes were poured out on me; ruin, poverty, sickness, anything. You will think this extravagance. But I know how to struggle, and would welcome such trials. But there are other things that *must* walk with us through life till we reach our graves. That nothing *here* can atone for. That gives us a dismal pleasure in gloom and misery, because we know the more we suffer the more we are atoning."

She answered him as excitedly as he had spoken; and the setting

sunlight outside came now in a gorgeous slant from the amber panes, right on the amber hair.

"Why," she said, "this is the hopeless doomed Calvinist's faith —despairing, wretched, hopeless! It makes me miserable to hear you talk so; it fills me with despair. I don't know your sad history. But no matter what has happened. I conjure you and implore; I would go down on my knees here, in this sacred place, to ask you, dear Mr. Tillotson, to fly from yourself and banish this fatal, miserable, destroying idea!"

"And what *am* I to do?" he said, putting his hand to his forehead. "Ah! if *you* preach, I must listen. Call it destroying, despairing, horrible—what you like. But you do not know—you cannot guess——"

"I can look into your face," she said confidently, "and see none of the cold hard lines of guilt. I can tell that you have been, to use the common hackneyed form, more sinned against than sinning. That, when young, you have been foolish, thoughtless, and have thus done things which others do coldly and with guilty premeditation——"

"Oh," he said, "it is indeed as you say. I dare sometimes flatter myself it is so. Thank you a thousand and a thousand times over for this kind judgment. I shall think of it, and force myself to believe it. You say you look in my face: but can you *look at this hand?* Ah! is there no physiognomy in the hand?"

She shrank back a little. "It is not for me," she said, "to pass judgment; nor do I wish to know the course of any one's past life. That is for his conscience."

"They have not put 'Confessionals' round this cathedral," he said bitterly. "I wish to Heaven sometimes they had. I saw you turn away, Miss Millwood. You see I judged myself better, after all, than *you* could do."

"No, indeed," she said eagerly, and coming back close to him again; "you mistake. You spoke so mysteriously."

"And yet you must not," he said, "take with you a wrong impression. Whatever was done was forced upon me."

"And tell me," she said suddenly; "have you no relative—no sister, father or mother?"

"Not one left," he said in a strange steady key of despair that went to her heart; "and yet it all rested with me!"

With a start she shrank away.

"Ah! I see it," he said bitterly. "How empty are professions! No matter; I was young, and careless, and wicked. 'Wild' is the gentle word of the world. I was wilder than even those complimented as wild. I was sent abroad to save them at home from disgrace, although it nearly broke *their* hearts. But it had to be done. We are not in a confessional, Miss Millwood; but I am telling you everything. I went away recklessly, rejoicing at being

free then and for ever. After a time my father, ill and broken, sent for me. I in part disbelieved the illness; in part was too proud, and said, 'Let them come to me, since they sent me away from them;' in part listened to some wicked friends who were real 'men of the world.' Yet I *did* feel—I did indeed, Miss Millwood; though I cannot expect you to believe me."

"How you mistake!" she answered. "I believe you, and feel for you. Indeed I do."

"But you have not heard all. There came a passionate letter from her, laying his death at *my* door; calling me her husband's murderer; telling me to be an outcast, never to come near her, to end my wretched course as soon as I pleased, and let her end hers. That roused my wretched pride again; and oh, Miss Millwood, what will you think of me? I went on from worse to what was yet worse. One vile story after another travelled home about me, some true, some false; but all reaching, until came *that most fatal* story of all, which, oh, Miss Millwood, *was true, true,* and ever must be true!" He could not go on.

But, in a voice of the tenderest sweetness, she said to him, "There, you must not think or talk of these things. I can understand. I don't wish to know more. And still I repeat what I have said before; whatever has happened, you must try and struggle. It is a duty, and the best atonement you can make to that lost parent."

"Ah!" he said despairingly. "Dear Miss Millwood, I must go on as I have gone on. I have indeed tried travel, books, and now business, hard, constant, laborious business. I am longing to get up a *greed* of money. If that were to take possession of me body and soul, I might drive the other enemy out; but, someway, should it not be kept there? It is better to go on to the end even as it was at the beginning. Though since I have come down here, I seem to have got upon more quiet waters. What with this cathedral and its old world associations, this little enclosure about it, and its air of peace and happiness, I seem to be less wretched, or rather, it seems to me that there is less misery in the world. And some words of yours, dear Miss Millwood, have sunk deeper than perhaps you would fancy."

The great pillars and arches had began too cast broader and broader shadows. The light behind the amber panes had gradually faded, and left them cold and dull. The glories of the sunset had gone down. The monument to the Yeomanry Captain looked like a spectral dining furniture set out for a ghostly banquet. Suddenly two figures came round the corner, and stopped before them.

"So we have found you! Come," said Ross, roughly, "what does all this mean? Nice work! Is this a place for you? Don't you know how long they have been looking for you?"

"I am coming," she said, softly. "I was playing——"

Ross laughed. His laugh echoed harshly through that great cave.

"You hear that. How ready a woman is with her excuse! Why, we didn't hear a sound this hour back. Perhaps *you* were playing also —an undiscovered accomplishment."

"Let us go away now," she said, hastily. "Don't let us lose time. Come, Mr. Tillotson."

She went on in front with Mr. Tillotson. The other two followed hastily.

"We were unfortunate," said Ross's friend, "that we came too late for the music. I should like to have heard that old instrument trembling and roaring under your fingers, Miss Millwood."

"And don't forget our friend, who hates cricket, and I suppose dropped in here by the merest accident," said Ross.

"It *was* accident," said Mr. Tillotson, calmly; "but what of it, supposing it were not? This cathedral, a wonderful exception, is, I believe, always kept open like the foreign ones."

"Ready always at repartee, is he not? Mr. Tillotson, the London banker, can give us lessons down here. Can't he, Bob?"

"Why should you say that?" said his friend. "Why, you are as bitter as an almond. Confound you, why, if you spoke that way to a Mexican gent, he'd have you out on horseback in ten minutes, with a Colt's repeating musket opposite. My dear friend, you must keep your tongue in order. You won't meet every one with such restraint and moderation as this gentleman."

The banker coloured. "Mr. Ross knows I have not restrained myself nearly so much as I ought to have done."

Ross stamped his foot savagely down on the pavement.

"Ah! that would be different, of course," said Grainger.

"*Will* you stop?" said Ross, his face glowing suddenly, and his eyes glaring. "What is this you mean? Come on in front—I wish to speak to you," he said, seizing her arm. "Come quickly;" and he almost dragged her on.

"Our friend," said Grainger, nodding his head, "is a little rough at times; but he is really good, and means well." He has heard some bad news to-day, about the prospects of his law suit. No man is so fretful as a litigant."

"Well," he said with a dismal ruefulness, "I suppose I must weather on somehow. Begin again, perhaps. There's nothing wonderful in it, after all. It has happened to plenty more before my time. But now leave it. I don't want to talk of it any more. What's been doing? What's been going on?"

Mr. Tillotson felt pity for him.

"You must cheer up, Mr. Ross," he said good-naturedly, and going up to him. "It may not be so bad as reported. Things may turn out better. Don't be cast down."

Mr. Ross looked at him from his foot up to his head.

"Have you seen the letter that came to me this morning? No, should say not," he said with a sneer. But he checked himself,

and added in a softer tone, "No, the thing is about as bad and as settled as it can be."

Then Ada spoke in a low voice. "It may be as Mr. Tillotson says. We must all hope for the best. Don't be cast down—*don't*, William. It's not so great a blow, after all." And she came up to him with a soft imploring look.

"Why don't you say, While there's life there's hope, or some other amiable platitude? Good gracious! What are you all looking at me in this way for? Is a man that has got a letter such a wonder? You are delightful comforters."

"Look here, Mr. Ross. I fear you do not understand me, but I mean you well—I do indeed. If I can be of any service in this misfortune I hope you will only show me the way. Recollect, you have some claim on me for an unfortunate mistake I once fell into."

For a moment there was a softened expression in Ross's face, but only for a moment. This was an unlucky allusion. There was a cold stiff iron bar of pride that ran through his frame from his very head to his heel.

"You are very good," he said coldly. "But I want no assistance. I have remarked, since you came here, you have been kind enough to be making me these sort of offers. What interest, might I ask, have you got in me? Is it for my own pure merits? I have not been in the world so short a time as to believe *that*. And as for what you allude to about——"

"Well, then," said the other eagerly, "it is for the sake of another who I can see *is* a little interested in you."

"Ah, I thought so. Now we have it. Then let me tell you, Mr. Tillotson, great banker as you are, I have seen your game from the beginning. I know what you are staying here and coming here for, with your benevolent and sympathising looks. I suppose you want to make capital, as you do out of the funds, with this grand pity and generosity. An excellent dodge. But look here, Mr. Tillotson the banker," he added, raising his voice. "I may have to go away, I suppose—somewhere—I don't care where. But I shall be watching you wherever I am. You are counting on my being beaten in this. But I give you warning. If I am, some one shall suffer! I am not a man to stand these tricks, and I give you notice——"

There was a rustle of a dress close beside them, and there was a sweet voice too of grief. "Oh, for shame! for shame!" it said. "I could not believe this of you! I begin to think you are unworthy of all pity, kindness, generosity Mr. Tillotson, say no more to him. I am grieved, I am shocked, that your goodness should have exposed you to this; but I had thought that this—this *man*—had *some* feeling in him. But I begin *now* to see what he is."

He looked from one to the other with a look of impatient fury.

"So this is what you are beginning to think?" he said. "I don't care who thinks that I have feeling or not. I want no compliments in that way as to thinking well or ill of me. You are both in a charming partnership. Not that I mind, indeed. Good-evening to you *both*."

The feeling in his listeners was that this was mere insanity—his eyes were so wild—and that common shape of insanity that comes from a furious struggle of such passions as contempt, disappointment, rage, and pride.

Ada's eyes were flashing, her cheeks glowing. "I thought," she said bitterly, "that under all that rudeness and roughness there was a kindness and natural generosity. But he has undeceived me now. I have tried," she continued, in a voice that still trembled a little, "to hope the best, and do what little I could by my poor words to save him from himself. But it is useless now. Let him go."

It was scarcely surprising that Mr. Tillotson's cold cheeks should have found colour at these words, or that he should have felt a thrill of something like pleasure. Then she seemed to recollect herself, fell into a sort of confusion, and fled away.

Mr. Tillotson went home almost elated, and found himself looking on the little town with a sort of reverence and affection which he had not felt before. That night he wandered a long time about the old cathedral, looking up to it tranquilly, mentally resting within its shadows, scarcely able to make up his mind to go home. Suddenly he heard a step behind him, as if some one was running to overtake him, and, looking round, he saw Ensign Ross. But it was Ensign Ross with wild eyes of fury and inflamed cheeks.

"Ah! I have found you alone," he said, panting. "I was sure you had slipped away home. But you are doing the romantic there, it seems."

"And what do you want?" said Mr. Tillotson, stopping calmly. "You can have nothing to say to me."

"Haven't I, Mr. Banker! Then you are wrong. There is no foolish woman here to protect you, before whom you can speak so mildly and gently. A nice protection—a fine opportunity of showing off!"

"I do not want to quarrel with you," said Mr. Tillotson, still calmly, and moving across the grass towards the path. "We had better not talk any more to-night."

"Don't be alarmed," said the other. "Don't fear for yourself. This is not a lonely place. There is the old watchman passing by. A cry of yours would reach every one of these windows. See! there is some one actually looking out. There is no violence going to be done."

For the first time for many months of his life Mr. Tillotson became impatient.

"What right have you to speak to me in this way, or in the way

you have done since I have come here? I have borne much from you—too much. I have made what amends I could for what I did under a mistake. I must ask you to say what you want with me at once, or I shall not stay another moment."

They were walking on together. People in their little old-fashioned windows—some of which had diamond panes, and were embroidered round and round with ivy and moss, and where lights were twinkling—thought that these were two gentlemen walking home pleasantly after dinner.

"Do I want to keep you, or to talk with you? But I tell you something very plainly. I have been watching you from the moment you came here. I am not a man to put up with interference of any sort. You think because you found out that I was falling in the world—that you, with your banker's money and your brass shovels and cheques—that you could step in and put that girl against me! That was fine generous conduct!" (His tone was softened.)

"That girl?" said Mr. Tillotson. "Miss Ada Millwood?"

"Yes. Oh, how astonished you are! Not that I care much for her, or that I believe that she cares for me. She's a weak creature, with no mind or character. But still one of these days, perhaps, I might have changed my mind. I may have my designs about that woman. She was in some sort *mine*, and you saw it. You *did!* You thought I was *down!* And I suppose, because the world chose to turn against me, and banking fellows and usurers to strip me of everything, *you* thought you would come in with the rest, and that I should be too weak, too 'down,' to resist you. But I am *not;* and you shall find that I am not, Sir."

He planted himself suddenly in front of Mr. Tillotson. The people in the old windows, just going to bed, thought these were two jocular minor canons going home full of spirits.

Mr. Tillotson met his gaze. "I see you are one of those who mistake good-nature and indulgence for fear. I do not understand your threats; nor do I mind them. I will only tell you this. You might have made a friend of me. I was willing to help you. But I see your real character now. Even one who may have had some interest in you, you have succeeded in turning against you. *She* has seen your character too."

"How *dare* you!" said the other with a trembling voice. "Now listen to me. For all this air of triumph, you have not tricked me as yet, even with your money and banker's work. No, nor shall not. Now take this warning, I advise you!"

Mr. Tillotson tossed his head impatiently, and turned away.

"I may have to leave this place—this cursed place; and I am glad of it. They may be too much for me—for the moment only. But I shall get the better of them all in a month or two. I am not to be beaten by the world or by money, or even by *mild schemers*. Now take this warning. Go away, too, or by

Heaven, if I hear a whisper of any tricks like what you have been at these few weeks, I'll come back from any quarter of the world and give you a lesson. There! you'll think this all disappointed love, and that sort of thing. But it's *my* pride, I can tell you. *You* a rival indeed! You shake your cheque-book in a foolish country-girl's eyes, and of course—— Think of your age and looks, my friend! Look at the matter calmly in your bank-parlour."

"This sort of speech has no effect on me," the other replied calmly. "Only a madman would talk as you do. But I shall tell you this openly and fairly, as an answer to your 'warnings.' What I have seen of you to-night, and before to-night, would lay an obligation on me to try and save a sweet gentle amiable girl from what would be sheer misery and destruction. My answer to your warning therefore is another warning. And how little I fear your threats you will find out from my behaviour, or from whoever you leave behind you to watch it."

He walked away calmly, leaving the other speechless with fury. The lady in the old moss-covered window, just putting out her light, thought that the two jocular canons had said good-night in the most friendly way, and had gone home to their canons' roosts.

Thus did the days wear on at St. Alans, until it came to the day or so before the assizes began. Mr. Tillotson found a strange calm and quietness in the place, and also a fascination, the charm of which he could not bring himself to break. He even fell into Mr. Tilney's raptures, and began to look on "the grand old cathedral" itself with a dreamy interest. The picture of that evening, when *she* was playing the solemn old organ, was in itself a sweet dream.

CHAPTER X.

THE ASSIZES.

THERE was a good deal of stir in the assize-town that evening. Gowns of two sorts fluttered in the air. It was known that the judges had arrived, with the traditional pageantry—brought in, at a slow pace, as if under a strong guard, surrounded with a crowd, and looking gloomily out of the carriage-windows, like state prisoners being conveyed to the Tower. From various second floors over the festive grocers' shops, looked out healthy, large-cheeked, large whiskered faces, the hands related to which were in pockets; barristeria,

faces and barristerial hands. Some were leaning against the window-frame with their barristerial feet up on the sill, others talking to short wiry monastic-looking men,—eminent counsel receiving "instructions" from a local agent.

Mr. Justice Buckstone and Mr. Baron Hodder were at their lodgings, about which a little crowd hung—and where, too, they were regarded with a reverence and a submission almost abject, as though they took their commission from a power higher than the Queen. Round through the town, dispersed in various first floors, were the numerous members of the circuit. Serjeant Ryder, Mr. Cobham, Q.C., Mr. Wrigley, Q.C., Mr. Colter, Q.C., Belmore Jones, the well-known popular counsel, who was as necessary to every breach-of-promise case as the writ itself or one of the issues, and who defended Chartists and others "fearlessly," and with great speeches. Mr. Colter and all the great counsel, were instantly, and almost before they had time to get from the railway or take off their coats, invaded by gentlemen with papers; and "the Serjeant," in about five minutes, had his hands in his trousers-pockets, walking up and down the room (his characteristic mode of laying his mind to a case), listening to his junior's voice, which comes struggling through perfect billows of white briefs. The old cathedral town—and some of our canons make a little first-floor profit during this invasion—thus wakened up into a sort of owl-like animation. But the grander scene was when half-past six drew on, and this legal aristocracy was seen, still with its hands in its pockets, crowding to the White Hart to dine; where they were to sit down some forty or fifty strong; where was the Bar sherry and the Bar port—much relished by the legal babes. But Colter, pale and worn, and with faint eyes, was already wandering away to Whichelo's Trusts, lying on his table at the lodgings, or to Mill's case, which was to be "on" first on Monday morning.

But as Sunday intervenes—supposed reasonably to be a day of rest for all but poor Colter and Bolt—it is worth while going up to the cathedral to see the legal service for once. Through all the monotony of Sunday after Sunday, and the choristers and minor canons every day at three, without change and the most wearisome sameness, and Fugle with his "heart panting," this was a very agreeable break. Mrs. Toplady and her daughters get on their best and go. Dissenting ladies even, drawn by natural curiosity, went off also "to see the judges." Across the green lawn in the Close the lines of company seemed to trail and converge like gay ribbons. The sun was out. The choir was full. The vast clothes-presses seemed to creak under the load, for every rank and every tier were filled, and the rows of gay bonnets and dresses were parted by the long bands of dark black oak; and the light coming through the pale yellow and paler greens of the great windows, dappled over the two heads of the two judges who sat together in stalls of honour, imparting a regular saint's "nimbus" to the chalky well-worn face of Mr. Baron Hodder,

and comically laying what seemed a little dab of crimson gore right on the bald crown of the rubicund and oily Mr. Justice Buckstone. They had been brought in by the dean himself, and stalled helplessly, and a great prayer-book thrust into their hands. All dotted about were praying barristers, with their large serious faces, and whiskers spread like black sails, for whom, indeed, those benches and stalls seemed but another shape of court; and if any one had pulled the dreamy Colter from behind, whose thoughts were still at his lodgings noting Whichelo's Trusts, and whispered that it was time, he would have almost risen and "moved" their lordships on the spot.

Mr. Baron Hodder, the Criminal Judge, with his eyes on his great book, was also wandering off to a terrible shooting case which was to be on before him, which had been committed on the verge of two counties; for he knew that Jones, the "Dock" counsel, would have "a point" about the indictment and "the five hundred yards" required by the statute, and he was thinking what "he would do with it;" all which speculations were disturbed by the music—the sublime anthem, "For the Lord is a Just Judge," set specially by Bliss, Mus. Doc. Oxon,—in complaint to the assizes,—and at which he was now straining and creaking, and snatching at pegs and handles left and right, and trampling the very souls out of pedals underneath —and by the sweet chirruping bleat of Fugle, whose eyes, like all other eyes in the place, turning to the right to make proper effect on the stall of honour, rose and fell; and he sometimes seemed to smile in his singing and droop his head sadly, as who should say, "Now all his finish—ed; let me be transfigured and assum—ed, forthwith, into my place in the heavenly mansions."

But the judges did not care for music, at first merely looking for a moment curiously at Doctor Fugle as they would at a new witness just entering the box; and so Fugle bleated his bleat mournfully, and the other seraphic canons came in tumultuously, and Bliss tumbling and surging in over all, sent down monster billows of sounds that swelled through the aisles, and went floating up the towers and groined roofs, and actually made the black-oak benches under the judges quiver and tremble with the vibration. And then, though Bliss's music was poor, and the singers, separately, theatrical and affected, the grand old organ—in which were some of the Dutch Silbermann's pipes, rich, ripe, mellow, and eclestial, and the fresh voices of children, and the union of all, and the associations of the place—triumphed over everything; and, as it rolled past the stalls of honour, made the Coke upon Lyttleton which each judge had bound up in him as a heart, thrill for a moment.

CHAPTER XI.

ROSS *v.* DAVIS.

THE cathedral town was extraordinarily full; the country gentlemen, who came in crowds, used the well-known illustration about "swinging a cat" with surprising frequency and satisfaction. The White Hart was at its wits' end to devise room for its guests, and, with an expansion to which it was well accustomed, had converted closets, store-rooms, even cupboards, into sleeping-rooms; and with a rigid impartiality charged the same tariff for the state bed-room and for the meanest little hutch in the garret.

The judges were already "in." The galleries were filled, for it was well known that the Tilneys, "those people who were always aping at grandeur," had some case coming on. At least it had reference to that "half-savage, ill-conditioned" Mr. Ross, and it was much the same thing. In the Crown Court, the faint-eyed, well-worn judge was already at work, with the faint eyes laid close to his note-book, while a rude agricultural Sikh, in a fustian-jacket and corduroy, stood up in the centre, like a living Jack-in-the-box. He was the prisoner in the great shooting-case, and the pen of Belmore Jones, who himself already scented "the point" from afar off, was racing over his foolscap, taking notes. In the other court, Mr. Justice Buckstone had disposed of the "little case" in a conversational way, just as he would dispose of his chop; and leaning back with eyes half closed, and tapping on his knuckles, was asking Mr. Cobham if he was ready to go on with that ejectment case. Cobham said he was perfectly ready, with a confidence as though he always had been, would, and ever should be ready in every case, no matter when called on. But the question, my lud, was the other side. He didn't know how his learned friend, Serjeant Ryder, felt; whether he was not taken by surprise through the rapid but satisfactory way in which his lordship had disposed of the last case.

"Then we had better have him in," said his lordship. Still Mr. Cobham whispers behind the back of his hand, and over his brother's shoulder, to his solicitor. The solicitor shakes his head, but turns to his neighbour, who is Ross, feverish and impatient. In a moment the heads of the two are together.

"You should settle," said Mr. Cobham, behind his hand. "Now take my advice—we've no chance."

Ross drew back, looking blank. "No," he said bluntly; "go on with your speech. You *must*."

"Now, Brother Ryder," said his lordship, with the points of his

fingers neatly put together, looking from side to side, and cracking his fingers faintly on his knuckles.

Presently there was a turning of faces, a rustling and a struggling, and the serjeant is labouring in, as it were, cutting a path through his fellow-creatures. *He* was ready, always was; in fact, was a little surprised it had not been taken long before. Everybody thus being ready, a jury is sworn—a dogged, agricultural, embarrassed-looking jury—and Mr. Paget opened the pleadings; this was an ejectment brought to recover possession of the lands known as Mount Davis. The defendant, Oliver Davis, pleaded so and so, "and the issues that you will have now to try," continued Mr. Paget, raising his voice, "are so and so," according to the usual form. He then dropped into his place. Mr. Cobham rising, put his handkerchief down on his brief before him, and placing one foot up on the seat, patting his knee now and then, a favourite attitude, proceeded to address the gentlemen of the jury.

Mr. Cobham said he would briefly show them how the case stood. It was a simple case—"one of the simplest, perhaps, that had ever come into a court of justice." It of course lay in a nutshell, and if they would let him "lead their minds," or "go with him for a short time," they would have no difficulty at arriving at a true apprehension of the point in dispute. It was, as they had heard, a simple action of ejectment as between one man and another. Both parties were in the same station; both parties came asking equal justice at their hands—a justice, he was confident, they would obtain. For he (Mr. Cobham) had had the honour of going that circuit for many years, and of addressing faces he had the privilege of seeing there often before him. His lordship, too, had come very often, and knew what the juries of that county were. Men more capable of dealing with the intricate relations that arise between man and man, there were nowhere, or men more likely to take a good common-sense view of any transaction. His lordship on the bench knew them; his learned friend there knew them; they all knew them. They were now to deal with this important case, the details of which he should now proceed to lay before them.

"It would appear," as Mr. Cobham said, putting his briefs farther away from him, and settling his bag and things as if he were laying breakfast, "that about the ye—ar" (Mr. Cobham lengthened out this word, to give himself time, with silver glasses up, to look for the date) "seventeen *hun*dred and ninety-seven, that a Mr. Oliver Davis was possessed of certain estates known as the 'Moore Hall' property, valued at the time at about eighteen hundred to two thousand a year. He was an old gentleman, unmarried, and, I may say, of somewhat singular and solitary tastes. He lived by himself, and saw no company. About the year eighteen hundred and one, or so, he fell in with an old friend, who had

newly come from India, where he had been engaged fighting for his king and country; a man of worth and courage; a man of honour, a gentleman, a soldier, whose name was—was Gen—er—al" (added Mr. Cobham, stooping down to refresh his memory, through the silver glasses, as to the name of the man of worth and honour), "yes, General Halton Ross—General Halton Ross. Halton Ross," said Mr. Cobham, twisting his glasses by the string, and now quite interested with the officer, whose name he could not recollect, "was the father of my client here!"

Ross, with a painfully eager face had been bent forward, with his fierce eyes devouring the counsel. Every one now looked at him. The heavy jury stooped over, as if to peer down into a pond. Ladies in the gallery found him out at once, and looked down also. He felt all their eyes on him, and, with unconcealed mutterings, flung himself back into his seat. Mr. Cobham, with his knee up, had coughed into his India handkerchief, and was abstractedly looking into its folds to pick up some more facts there.

"It would seem that the old intimacy of the two was renewed. They became firmer friends than ever; and about the year eighteen hundred and"—(a fresh search here)—"yes, and ten, a draught-deed was prepared, virtually conveying the whole of the Moore Hall estates to his friend—(give me the draught-deed," he called to his junior, who had it dragged out and opened in a second)—"under the following *remarkable* limitations. First to trustees, in trust for himself, for life; then——"

Serjeant Ryder was now standing up.

"What is that? What are you reading from?"

"The draught-deed of eighteen hundred and ten," said his friend, in mild astonishment at the interruption.

"Which was never executed. I object to that paper. No one knows better than my learned friend that it is not evidence. Just put it up."

"I was reading this," said Mr. Cobham, mildly, "as evidence of the *intentions* of Oliver Davis. My learned friend will see I am quite regular."

"I object," said Serjeant Ryder, apparently angry at this trifling, "to *any* paper of this sort. Let's do things regularly."

"My Brother Ryder," began the judge with enjoyment.

"We shall have to come on this later," said Mr. Cobham.

"And we were going to enter it now, *nunc pro tunc*, as part of that case," supplemented his junior, much injured.

"My Brother Ryder," said the judge with humour, "it seems, objects to *take* your draught."

Again the waves of obsequious merriment floated over the bar benches. The country gentlemen in the grand-jury boxes, indirectly affiliated to the legal profession, relished it with broader and more unrestrained mirth.

When the court had recovered from the effect of his humour, his lordship said, with graduated remonstrance,

"I think, Brother Ryder, we must let in this paper. Come, I don't see how we well can't. It seems good evidence of intention. Eh?"

"As good as ever was given," said Mr. Cobham. "A draught-deed."

"Surely," said Serjeant Ryder, stooping over earnestly, "your lordship can't be in earnest. A draught-deed, unsigned, in God knows whose handwriting! We may as well begin again at our elementary books, if *that* be considered evidence."

"I *think* I must let it in, Brother Ryder," said his lordship gravely.

"Very well, my lord," said the serjeant, looking to the right and left resignedly. "Just as you please; with all my heart and soul. Go on with the case."

"His lordship," went on Mr. Cobham, "having ruled this piece of documentary evidence to be admissible, I was going to say (give me the letter of the 25th June)—to say that old Oliver Davis, in a letter dated the 25th June, and which we now produce, and which my learned friend may see if he likes, alludes to this intended disposition of his property." And Mr. Cobham read his letter triumphantly. "But this draught-deed does not affect the matter. Not in the least. It would seem however, that a sort of coldness sprang up between the friends, and later a cousin, a William Davis, then an elderly man, was taken into favour, and on the twenty-first —of—August," said Mr. Cobham, with glasses on, and his face well down to his brief, "eighteen hundred and twelve, he executed a deed of settlement, by which he conveyed all the Moore-Hall estates—to—William Davis—and his heirs, in the usual way. That deed was duly executed, and was in court. His learned friends were welcome to——"

"We admit all the proofs," said the serjeant contemptuously. "Go on with the case."

"By that deed he made himself tenant for life, with remainder to William Davis, his first and other sons in tail male, remainder to his heirs general—in the usual way, in fact. In default of these, the estate was settled on his old friend, General Halton Ross, and heirs male. To compress the whole into a sentence," said Mr. Cobham, "our title is this:"

The story, in short, told them by Mr. Cobham, and told dramatically—but not in a sentence—amounted to this: In course of time Oliver Davis died, and William Davis, the cousin, succeeded. William Davis, the cousin, had one child, called William Oliver Davis (and indeed, by-and-by, the jury got bewildered when the learned counsel began sonorously to ring their names like loud bells, now pulling "Will-i—am Davis," and then, with a far fuller

reverberation, "Will-i—am Oliver Davis"), then married, and his daughter, Alice Olivia Davis, was the defendant in the present suit.

"I have thus, gentlemen of the jury," said Mr. Cobham, "taken you so far through all the steps of the title." So indeed he had. And that title being conceded satisfactory, the laymen in court wondered how it was to be disturbed. But now began the dramatic part. "It would seem that William Oliver Davis, while a young man, and previous to his marriage, travelling in Scotland, fell in with a manufacturer's daughter of strong will and great cleverness. This lady, whose father was on the verge of bankruptcy, had discovered the prospects that were in store for young William Oliver Davis, and had determined to secure him. He was a wild youth, had fallen passionately in love with the young lady, and had married the manufacturer's daughter secretly, according to some Scotch form, which he—William Oliver Davis—believed would not hold good in England. As if," said Mr. Cobham, passionately, "that tie, that holy tie, which is good before Heaven in one spot, shall not be good before the same tribunal in another—as if the union that is cemented in the wildest island of the Hebrides is not to be equally enduring on the ruggedest shore of the Irish coast—at the Land's End as well as at John o' Groat's corner! Thank God," said Mr. Cobham, warming unexpectedly, "a Scotch marriage still holds good in this fair land of England, and is still a protection for helpless women against the designs of wicked men!"

Later on, the youth returned to his family, and soon heard that the Scotch lady had turned out very strangely—had run away from her parents with a captain, and was supposed to have died miserably. Three or four years later, the youth married an heiress, and died, leaving a daughter. The point of the whole thing was to be this. As William Oliver was married in Scotland, or was maintained to have been married, the second marriage was a nullity, and the offspring of that marriage—who was the present defendant—was illegitimate, and could not "come in" under the terms of the settlement. It therefore passed to the Rosses, who were the other parties in remainder named in the deed.

Then he explained the way in which the present action came to be brought. The plaintiff's father was an old and infirm man of eighty when his rights accrued, was very nervous and excitable, and declared that he would have "no law" during the short span of his life that remained. He had died a couple of years before, and Ross the present plaintiff, then serving in India, had come home at once, and had lost no time in making his claim.

A very strange case, and stated by Mr. Cobham with all his usual clearness; but how would they make it out? This was said by the great legal unemployed among each other, when the judge

retired to lunch. That was all very well; but how would they make it out? The court, as it were, stood at ease. Every one was chatting, and put on their hats; not that they cared to have them on, but for the pleasure of having them on now, at least without check or restraint.

Ross hung about the door, every now and again putting in his wistful face with the fiery eyes. "They call this doing justice," he said. "I begin to see how it will end! That old swine on the bench cares no more for the case than he does for an old shoe. It's disgusting. Look at the way they waste the public time—jabbering away over his sherry and chop."

They were at work again. A very broken-down old man, with white hair and a walnut-face, but yet with a cunning expression in his eyes, was being examined by Mr. Cobham. He was striving to hear, striving to speak; and Mr. Cobham was striving to catch what words came from him. The judge was conscious of a window at the far end of the court, and motioning with hand; but whenever Mr. Cobham stopped, said, "Go on, Mr. Cobham." Ross stamped savagely under the table. And there, too, was his leading counsel, looking from side to side, carelessly sucking an orange. The administration of justice was growing disgraceful in this country.

"The trouble we had to get at this old fellow," said the solicitor's clerk to two or three barristers near the door—"to dig him up, almost. Mr. Grainger, Ross's friend, was the man who did the job. He hunted him up for two months, night and day; never let him go for a moment; hung on him like a bulldog. It was wonderful. Listen now. He is doing wonderfully well."

So he was. Under the skilful leading of Mr. Cobham, who had at last got the range, and could hear himself, and make the old man hear, he began to tell his story: how, about the year so-and-so, in the month—he couldn't give the month—he was in Aberdeen, sitting down stairs one evening; how he recollected Miss Macgregor sending him out *for* to bring young William Davis to her. He was not very willing, but he did come at last. After a time he heard stampings and "whirritings," and sounds of sobbing and wailing; and he owned, to the great merriment of the court, that he had crept up stairs and listened, and that the whole dispute was about a marriage. Presently he heard the young man say, very sulkily, "Well, call up Jamie and the maid, and I'll do what you like." "And then," said the old man, amid loud laughter, "I thowt it were high time for me to be going." (His lordship was really diverted, and, to add to the hilarity, said, "You were afraid of being surprised, no doubt?") The old man and the maid were then called up into the room, and William Oliver, standing up with the young leddy's hand in his, told them that he declared that he and the young leddy were man and wife, and

jid them recollect what he, Mr. Davis, had said. They then retired, wondering at this ceremony, which, as Mr. Cobham explained to the jury, was one of the formulas to constitute a Scotch marriage, and was known as a contract of *verba de præsenti*. There was great sensation at this the dramatic portion of the trial, and yet greater when Serjeant Ryder stood up, and all but dressed himself, carefully arranging his wig and gown with dandyism, to cross-examine the old man.

The old man kept his wiry fingers tightly clasped as he was put to the customary question, "To whom did you tell *this* story first? When did you tell it? Why didn't you tell it before?" with more to the same effect; the old man answering warily, with his head on one side and his wiry fingers tightly clasped together. Mr. Cobham presently "interposed," and said his learned friend would learn all that by-and-by from the plaintiff here and his friend, who by almost miraculous exertions had found out this important witness.

But Serjeant Ryder was not to be disposed of in that fashion. He affected to submit, and with a quiet eagerness for information began to ask particulars about the old man's life. Where was he in such a year? Ah! very good. Well, from that year to such a year what was he doing? Come now, try and recollect. Oh, he must. You know you must have a capital memory to recollect all this about the parlour and the calling up. Well, he was in Aberdeen. What! during all these long years never out of Aberdeen? Never—that is to say, never. Why, had he never been out of the country? N—no—that is, yes, for a time. What, travelling? It was only for a time. What, travelling? repeated the learned gentleman in a louder voice. Well, he supposed a man could travel if he liked. Was it travelling for pleasure or profit—come now? Then came one of those secret inspirations which to a lawyer are as convincing as a revelation. "Come, Sir," said the serjeant in a solemn roar, "WERE YOU EVER SENT AWAY OUT OF THE COUNTRY?"

This was spoken of afterwards among the Bar as "a lucky shot in Ryder." Witness was in great confusion. "Come, Sir," roared the serjeant as from a quarter-deck; "take your hand down and answer. Come, Sir."

Cobham really must interpose here. Up to a certain point he had given his learned friend any latitude. But Ryder was now savage; he was not to be interrupted; the witness was in his hands; he must beg that Mr. Cobham would sit down, and sit down at once. After a terrific combat over the old man, who was looking vacantly from one to the other, the answer was at last wrung out of him that he had been seven years away, in Botany Bay. Then Ryder sat down panting and fanning himself.

Other witnesses then came: among them Mr. Tilney, who took the oath with extraordinary reverence and solemnity, and added the

words, "So help me God, Amen," of his own motion, and with great fervour. Relating what he felt afterwards at dinner, he said, "I was in the presence of my Maker, you know; and I was to speak the whole truth, every particle of the truth, and nothing in the wide world but the truth—words which seem to me *awfully* impressive." But he did not think that perhaps the simple text of the original would have been more so.

What had Mr. Tilney to tell as to this trial? Simply this: With the leave of his lordship there he would relate all he knew in his own way, which might, after all, simplify the matter——

His lordship thinks bluntly, and without raising his spectacles from the paper, that he had better answer any questions put in the regular way.

"Yes," says Mr. Paget; "if you will follow me, Mr. Tilney, we shall be shorter. Now, had he ever heard any allusion in the family to this Scotch marriage—any discussion, you know—and when?"

Mr. Tilney put a long first finger to his forehead, in the shape of a large human knocker, as who would say, "I will rap *here*, and find out for you." And then, after thinking painfully, said that about twenty years ago he remembered distinctly being at the table of General Ogle, who was then Colonel Ogle, and equerry to His Royal Highness the Dook of York. He had served in the disastrous Walcheren——"

"In short," said Mr. Paget, "he dined with you. Any one else?"

"I could tell you," said Mr. Tilney, "the names of every one there, just as if it were yesterday; only give me a little time. There was——"

"Never mind *that*," said Mr. Paget. "Was there a John Davis there, cousin of the settlor?"

"There was," said Mr. Tilney, with the knocker up, and seeing the cousin up in the cornice. "There was; and there was also——"

"Very good. Now let me ask you, did any one say anything about this matter of the marriage?"

"I distinctly recollect," said Mr. Tilney solemnly;—"and I know that I am on my oath, and in presence of the Searcher of hearts—General Ogle, then Colonel Ogle—I recollect his saying distinctly——"

Again the serjeant was standing up. "I must interpose here, my lord. This can't be evidence."

"General Ogle said that William Oliver Davis had told him——"

"*Will* you stop, Sir?" said the serjeant. "D'ye hear me, Sir? Is that Ogle alive or dead?"

"I can't take on me to say," said Mr. Tilney wisely. "No, no; not that."

"Exactly," said the serjeant. "Then your lordship sees at once this can't be evidence."

"I don't see that," said his lordship with a pleasant twinkle.

Mr. Cobham started up. "Ogle," he said, "was a relation of the Davis family."

"Let them prove the death of Ogle, or call Ogle," said the serjeant excitedly; "but let us keep to the common principles of evidence."

Mr. Justice Buckstone said, however, he was inclined to admit this piece of evidence *de bene esse*, "as family repute," and that he would make a note of the objection. There was then a discussion as to what amounted to "family repute."

Again the serjeant lay back resignedly, and looking from side to side.

"Go on, Sir," he said; "go on. Tell your story any way you like."

And then Mr. Tilney said how Colonel Ogle had told him how William Oliver had come to him in a maudlin state, saying that he was undone, and that there was a wretched woman in Scotland who had entangled him in some of their infernal marriage tricks, and that he was a miserable creature generally.

Mr. Cobham, during this important bit of evidence, had his eyes fixed on the jury with an expression almost amounting to—"What did I tell you, now?" and nodded very often as Mr. Tilney told his tale.

It was very hard to get that gentleman out of the box; for when dismissed with a "That will do, Mr. Tilney," he would wave off that congé with a "Pardon me!" and begin again with fresh but unimportant details, which, as it were, lay on his conscience.

"Quite right, Mr. Tilney; now you can go."

"Pardon me," he said. "I have taken an affidavit here to tell every particle of the truth, the entire substratum of the truth, and nothing whatever *but* the truth—without fear, favour, or affection. His lordship, I know, would not wish me."

Then two highly-important letters were handed in of remote date, which alluded to conversations with William Oliver Davis in reference to his marriage. These were objected to, on the ground of *post lis mota*—that is, as having been written at a time *after* the question of the disputed marriage had arisen.

This was fiercely argued on both sides, as it was really important evidence. And the two counsel seem to be straining and toiling to throw each other like Cumberland wrestlers. But the judge again said with a smile, "He was inclined to let it in *de bene esse*." On which, Serjeant Ryder flung himself into his seat angrily, and said "he thought he had learned the rules of evidence when he was a boy; but it seemed he must begin again. God bless him! What were they coming to?" And he bade his learned friend—and almost commanded him—"go on." Some one near Mr. Cobham heard him whisper exultingly behind the back of his hand, "We got that in cleverly—eh? Old Buckstone *is* with us breast-high."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VERDICT.

AFTER this, the case proceeded rapidly. The defendants had little evidence. But Serjeant Ryder made a "splendid" and damaging speech, showing up the deaf, infirm, incoherent old convict "whom they had got" enlarged from his sentence expressly for this case, and invariably speaking of him as "the old convict," "my learned friend's old convict," "*their* convict," "for this indeed we have the convict's testimony," with more to the like effect, which some way depreciated the character of the plaintiff's case. He denounced the whole as a "con*coc*ted case," made the roof rëëcho with that word, and those at a distance only caught the middle syllable, and thought he was declaiming about poultry. Out in the great hall, down the long corridors, drifted those burning accents of "the counsellor's," denouncing the whole, with a gasp, as a "hideous tr-r-rumped-up case—concocted thing—con*coc*ted in its inception, concocted in its execution, con*coc*ted at the beginning, concocted in the middle, *concocted* at the end." And he asked them confidently (and at the same time suffering painfully to the naked eye from heat) to "*scout*" this action from the court. And he dropped exhausted into his seat, leaving the heavy jury in a state of pettish doubt and uncertainty as to what they were to think or do.

Then the judge charged; and at the close of the judge's charge, Serjeant Ryder's junior, who had been writing a good deal behind, put a paper into his leader's hand, who thereupon stood up and "tendered a bill of exceptions." Mr. Justice Buckstone, who did not wish to be "annoyed with the thing afterwards," said good-naturedly that "he put the thing as clearly as possible to the jury," and, if anything, rather more fairly for Serjeant Ryder's client than was consistent with strict justice. "Much better leave the thing to these gentlemen, who are quite capable of doing substantial justice between the parties. We shall only be embarrassing the case hereafter. Come, now," said the judge with an insinuating sort of invitation to his brother.

But his brother was cold, and stern, and hard, and pressed his exceptions.

"Well, read them, read them," said the judge pettishly.

They were:

1. That the learned judge should not have admitted in evidence a draught-deed, and one not in the handwriting of the settlor.

2. That Ogle's declaration as to a conversation on the alleged Scotch marriage should have been withdrawn from the jury, it not

being shown that Ogle and the other parties to the conversation were alive or dead.

3. That the two letters should not have been received as evidence, as being *post lis mota.*

Mr. Cobham listened to his learned friend's points with some anxiety, and not a little disturbed, but was reassured by something in the looks of the heavy hunting jury. Perhaps the unworthy disparagement of the "convict" had not so much effect, especially as he, in his reply, had effectually rehabilitated the convict into "an aged man," who had lived through many troubles and youthful follies ("and let such of us that are without sin, gentlemen, be the first to cast a stone"), who had travelled well-nigh on "to the great gates of the valley of the shadow of death, like us all," and who in his long life had done many things which he now wished *un*done, and had left things *un*done which, &c. In this way was this important witness rehabilitated. And then the jury retired.

It was now seven o'clock. Every one was rising, gathering up papers, talking pleasantly and noisily, and dispersing. Hot, flushed, worn, and with eyes that almost seemed to flare, Ross went out of the court into the cool air. Already the lamps were lighted and the gaudy grocers' shops illuminated, and a crowd of lounging idlers in corduroy and fustian gathered in the middle of the road. Ross came out, angrily pushing his way, and muttering impatiently about "idle people with nothing to do." He caught hold of his solicitor. "Well," he asked, "how do we stand now?" The other answered excitedly, "I don't know, Mr. Ross. I hope you will be satisfied before an hour is over—*fully* satisfied. I have washed my hands of the whole business, long ago. I hope you listened to Serjeant Ryder's speech, and that that satisfied you?"

He left him. Mr. Tilney came up with Mr. Tillotson, and took Ross's arm. They walked home together. "Come along!" he cried. "You take the other, Tillotson," he said, meaning his arm. "We have all gone through a great deal to-day."

"And you have picked up some encouraging news—eh?" said Ross.

"I said to myself," said Mr. Tilney dreamily, "in that witness-box, tell the exact truth, the whole undivided truth, and nothing in the wide world but the truth—just as the words run. You have no idea what a curious feeling it is. Dear me! I could have given them a perfect photograh of the little supper. Ogle came in as drunk as an owl."

"What a pity you didn't tell them *that!*" said Ross with a sneer.

"At all events," said Mr. Tillotson kindly, "I do think there are excellent chances. I thought there was a great impression made on the jury; and some one near me said, I think, they were all Radicals to a man."

"It is very good of you to take such trouble—very kind of you to say so," said Ross indifferently, and half sneering. "Let us get along quickly, for God's sake! I want some dinner, and then I must get back to that infernal court."

"There was a boy there that I ventured to engage to wait until the verdict came in, and then drive as hard as he could up to the Close with the news. I knew you would be anxious."

Ross looked at him half softened. "Very good of you," he said again. "We shall hear soon enough. Ill news will travel quicker than your boy."

It was a solemn and mournful dinner. The ladies of the family had heard the foreboding as to the result. Indeed, Mr. Cater had gone up expressly to repeat his declaration of its possible value at something under "twopence-halfpenny." Mrs. Tilney glowed and coloured now and again as she thought of the folly of the thing. There was but little spoken. Ross sat and glared on them, and at every sound outside looked with a start towards the window. As he did so, he saw Mr. Tillotson talking in a low voice to Ada Millwood; and he broke out impatiently:

"I wish you had left your boy and your cab alone. I have heard it coming twenty times now. And for God's sake, Ada, can't you leave that trial? You'll have plenty of time to talk of it, and to gloat over it, and to say what a pity about that Ross. Why wouldn't he take advice! I know the regular jeremiad. And the sensible friends will lay their heads together. Confound those mule-headed jurors!" he said, starting up; "can't they settle a simple case like that? And yet they can sell a horse, and weigh their meal, infernal dunder-headed crew! I never saw such a collection of oafs. I knew how it would be when they came into the box. But, I give you notice, it sha'n't stop here! Don't think it. I'll begin it all, all again. And I sha'n't be done. I sha'n't wait here any longer." And drinking off a tumbler of wine, he went out of the room.

An hour went by. Ross came back, tired, jaded, with a sort of hopelessness in his face. Mrs. Tilney read it off, and started up.

"There! He has lost!" she cried. "I told you so; I always said so."

"Hush!" said Mr. Tillotson, authoritatively. "They have not 'found' yet, I am sure. Is it not so?"

"Your *superior* divination," said Ross, "has hit it off. That old woman who tried it has just called them out, and they say there are some of them won't agree, and he wants to discharge them. The infernal old ass wants to go home and drink his claret, and go to bed after his debauch; but Cobham, who is good for something, has made him send them back for an hour or two. I hope to God he'll make him lock 'em all up for the night without fire or candles, and starve their fat carcasses into common sense! I'd like to give 'em a lesson all round that they wouldn't forget in a hurry!"

He was almost savage with vexation and suspense. Mr. Tillotson went away. Another hour passed by, then half an hour. Suddenly they heard wheels. They rushed to the window. It was the dean's carriage passing by.

"It's only that apostle Ridley coming home gorged! 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' You have a nice pack of drones down here, haven't you? There's one just gone home to the hive."

"Where's Mr. Tillotson, Augusta?" said Mrs. Tilney. "Was he to come back?"

"He's in his bed, of course," said Ross; "tucked in like a precise Puritan as he is. What's the fancy you have all taken to that fellow? Any one that knew anything of the world would see he was nothing but a common city prig."

Mrs. Tilney did not answer.

("I hold," she had always said to her friends, "as little communication as I can with him.")

Wheels again.

"There!" said Ross. "More drones for the hive. Why don't you all get up and rush to the window?"

But the wheels did not pass the window. A cab had stopped at the little green gate. There was a quick patter of steps on the gravel of the little walk. There were voices—voices of the solicitor and Mr. Cobham. Mr. Tillotson, opening the door, had rushed in with a radiant face—a face of real joy and satisfaction.

"It is all safe!" he cried. "You have gained! The jury have found for you!"

The whole family fell into a sort of tumult. They forgot their conventional restraint before company, and uttered a cry of joy.

Ross stood in the middle, looking round with exulting eyes, and for a moment without speaking.

"Ah! What did I tell you?" he said. "What did I always say? Do me justice *now* at least. Who shall say the bold game isn't the best—eh? Who has the best eyes and the best wit—eh?"

"Indeed, we were all wrong," said Mrs. Tilney, obsequiously.

"It is wonderful," said Mr. Tillotson, almost with enthusiasm; "and I am really so glad. I congratulate you again and again, Mr. Ross."

"Thank you," said the other with some softness; "I am obliged to you."

"And where is Miss Millwood?" said Mr. Tillotson. "We must tell *her*. Ah! here she is."

She came gliding softly in, without sound almost. She read the good news in all their faces. She went up to the centre figure; the yellow hair and the calm soft face beneath it were lit up as with a saint's glory.

"Dear, dear William, I am so happy!" she said.

"My lodgings are not far from here," said Mr. Cobham, "so I

thought I would look in and let you know. Very glad indeed—very."

"You did wonders, Sir, professionally," said Mr. Tilney, complimentarily. "You laboured through the dust and the heats. We owe it all to you, Sir, and I *think* a little to my testimony in that box."

"And to some other little help too," said Mr. Cobham, smiling. "Mr. Ross, just one word outside here."

They both walked out—down the path to the little gate. It was a calm night. The cathedral rose before them like a great Head on a shore, with a cold blue waste behind it.

"Fine thing that church of yours," said Mr. Cobham. "Well, look here; we have pulled through this, with a squeak, indeed. Take my advice, don't lose an hour in settling."

"Settle," said Ross, starting; "what d'ye mean?"

"Settle, settle, settle; just as Sir Robert said, 'Register, register, register.' It was next door to a miracle. You had a bull-headed jury, and the most ignorant judge on the bench. Why, Sir, the verdict won't stand a minute! We'll be upset on the exceptions."

"But surely *you* said they were——"

"In court, of course, we must do the best we can. Ryder was perfectly right; he had no business to admit those letters. Once the verdict is set aside, and we have only our convict to go upon! A nice fellow that, by the way! However, that's my advice, you know, and you can do as you like."

"Oh, of course," said Ross coldly. "You mean it well, and all that sort of thing. Oh, of course, we shall consider it."

"Just as you like," said the other; and walked away to tell the "brother" who shared his lodgings what a cold-blooded, ill-conditioned client he had pulled through as "up-hill a case" as ever he saw, and yet the savage had never asked him to dinner, or so much as thanked him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEAN'S PARTY.

When the result of the trial was known, there was a marked reaction in favour of the plaintiff. The little public of the place did not care to consider Serjeant Ryder's "bill of exceptions," or the "points" he had saved, but only looked to the substantial fact of the verdict. It took every one by surprise; and every one was now

lost in admiration of the spirit, energy, "pluck," and "gameness" with which young Ross had held on to his purpose, in spite of all advice and obstacles—even the great Doctor Topham, who had always shown an angry contempt for him, and had said openly, "that the fellow had neither wit, brains, nor sense!"

Later, Mr. Tilney came to his friend with somewhat more hopeful views of human nature. "Here's that dean—Ridley, you know, Lord Rooksby's brother—has sent us this for to-morrow night. You are to come. Mrs. Ridley saw you last Sunday at the sermon, and asked who you were."

"I never care," said Mr. Tilfotson. "I never go to parties. I fear I must be going away. I have been here longer than I intended."

"Nonsense. I am very glad of this," said Mr. Tilney; "it will amuse us. They do the thing very well at that house, I can tell you. I hear the Secretary is coming down to-night, and I suppose they want to make what they can of him." The deanery was an old house, with an enormous roof, like one of the steep stands the dean himself read from in the cathedral, with two tall chimneys at each side, also very like the lights at the side of the stand. It stood by itself in a garden, and had tall lanky windows, with many little panes in each; altogether, with a rustic ancient French-château air over it, and with the sort of dim reference to the cathedral an old retainer has to an old family.

The dean himself was a mild and amiable man, but whose life was literally a burden to him, from the joint terrorism exercised by Mrs. Ridley and Doctor Topham. With Mrs. Ridley singly he might have dealt; against Doctor Topham and his rude tyranny, his connection with the Treasury, and his secret influence with the bishop, he might have made some stand; but the cabals of the place, and the confusion brought by Doctor Topham's dislikes and despotism, his proclaimed purpose to get this man and that man "out," harassed and worried him beyond belief.

And very soon it became known that there was to be a great dinner-party at the deanery, with a faint rumour, to which, in some bosoms, hope was father, that the crowd might be admitted in "the evening" to a railed-off place, whence they might gaze their fill at the splendid strangers.

From afar off, across the common, the long lanky windows could be seen lighted up. The festival was known, and the selection of guests caused bitter heartburnings. Asking every stall in the cathedral, *that* was absurd; and when it was considered that every stall held a wife and large family, the thing became more absurd still. Some of the excluded came privily, and actually skulked about the common to watch the festivities they could not share in.

The dean's noble brother, Lord Rooksby, stood not in any reserved place, with a railing round him, or in an exhibitor's case—but simply

as any other man in the room. He was very tall, had grey hair, and a dried yellow face, which he kept very high, and well thrown back, and was explaining quietly to the archdeacon and Doctor Topham, who had dined, "what it seemed to him should be done with the Church." As the Tilney party entered in a long file, the whole room, with its contents, seemed in a state of rest and happiness, reposing after the state dinner, and content with the beatific vision of the nobleman who had "come among them."

There was to be music. Mr. Ridley had ordered some of the choir serfs to attend. These gathered behind the piano, and kept together for mutual protection, waiting until they should be wanted.

Mr. Tillotson had gone over to Ada Millwood. She had beckoned to him. "I wanted to speak to you," she said. "He went away this morning. It is the best thing for him, and for us all. But forgive me if I ask you—but that night I saw him—at least I am sure it was he—go up to you on the green. How much you have suffered from him, and so kindly borne with for him, I can guess. And I do fear that——"

"No, no, I understand him perfectly. I *did* make some allowance for him hitherto, but I begin to see that he has some incurable dislike to me. I have not the art of pleasing people. But he is gone, and, I suppose, will not come back."

"I suppose will not come back!" she repeated a little absently. "He talked of changing into some other regiment. It will be all for the best."

"Ah, if he had even the tact to know those who are inclined to befriend him!" said Mr. Tillotson, warmly.

"And so *you* are going away too," she said suddenly. "Going in the morning?"

"Yes, going back to the solitude—of the world. I am very glad of this opportunity, for I wished to speak to you before I went. Indeed, I should hardly have come here but for such a hope. There! They are beginning another of their glees. I have seen a great deal of your family life," he went on hastily. "I know you will forgive me what I am going to say, but *you* will give me credit for wishing to show that I would like to serve you. You have all been so kind to me, and I begin now to feel very desolate when left to myself. I could not help seeing many things in your house which I must have shut my eyes not to have seen."

Her eyes dropped upon the ground, and she did not answer.

"Again I ask you to forgive what I am going to say. The way of life in which I live quickens our observation. I have guessed a great deal more than I have seen; guessed that you—forgive me, I say again—were not so happy in that house as you deserve to be, Miss Millwood; and that though the family, I suppose, is affectionate, their hopes and wishes and aims of life are so different, that——"

"But why should you think this?" she answered gently, and as if wishing him to go on; "no one has surely told you?"

"Told me! no. But I have an instinct that we—that you and I—have suffered much the same. I fancy I have no one to understand me; that even in a crowd I am alone. That everything in life for me is cold, cheerless. From the moment I entered your house, from the moment, too, that *you* entered the room on that first night, something seemed to tell me that your life was like mine. Forgive me this absurdity."

"Mr. Tillotson," she said softly, "I do, indeed, know you, and believe you. Perhaps I have had some little sorrows of my own. Not, however, to compare with yours. No! no!"

"Little sorrows," answered he; "no, no. Then *they* are all for the world. They do not understand you. They never will, and I do not blame them. They cannot be what they have not power to be. But it is different for you. It will grow worse as time goes on. Every day it will become worse; the isolation and desolation will become unendurable. You feel it—you must feel it every day."

"Yes," she said quietly, without lifting her eyes.

"I know," he went on. "I have had dismal experience myself. For years I have scarcely known life properly. Within this week or so I have begun to feel life, the air, the warmth of the sun. Oh, such life, air, and warmth!" He said this with no melodramatic stress or attitude; but calmly, as he said everything else. She could not suspect that there was any secret meaning in it.

He went on: "What would I propose, what would I advise? you will ask. Recollect, I am going away, and have the privilege of a man on the scaffold. I seem to see one chance before me. It may prove to be a delusion—a will-o'-the-wisp—like everything else in life; but if I dared to speak plainly——"

She looked up hurriedly. "What *can* you advise? There is nothing that you could know, or could say, unless——"

"Ah! it may be no remedy after all," he went on quickly; "but it might. You have been kind to me, oh, so kind! I have felt that you sympathised with me. More I could not hope for. But perhaps in time—perhaps in compassion for one who has been so miserable and hopeless——"

She looked at him. "Oh, stop! stop! Mr. Tillotson," she said in alarm, "what do you wish me to say?"

"If I were any one else, or belonged more to the ways of the world, I might hide what I am going to say behind all manner of delicate hints. But it is better to speak plainly, is it not?"

"No, no, no," she said hastily. "Dear Mr. Tillotson, I implore you—no. Don't speak about *that*. Oh, why did you? This so grieves me!"

He started, almost rose, with a kind of half groan. "Have I made one more mistake?" he said sadly. "Ah, I can see I have.

I was going to ask you to leave this place—to come and begin a new, and what I believe would be a happier, life. Happier for us both. I have money and influence; these, too, would help to make you happy; and, as far as the supremest devotion——" she looked in her face, and paused. "Ah, but I see—one more mistake."

"Dear Mr. Tillotson," she said almost passionately, "how *can* I thank you? But it is impossible. There are reasons. If you knew —Oh, never, never, never!"

"Ah! I might have guessed this. It is the old fortune. It was the only chance left to me. It may go with the rest. There is the music beginning again."

It was the grinders at work once more. Doctor Fugle and his oarsmen labouring through another glee—to oblige the company.

"What will you think of me?" she said, despairingly. "I don't know what to say. You will despise me, because you will think I led you on to this. But I did not mean it to do so. Indeed no! Tell me that you do not think so."

"My fate and my mistake! I thought," said he, hopelessly, "that from the beginning you seemed to treat me with interest and kindness, and I stupidly mistook that kindness. I have made a hundred such blunders in my life. No, it was all my fault."

"Yes, I *did* feel an interest," she said, with some hesitation, "and I admired and pitied. I saw that you were alone, and——"

"To be sure. I understand. But I thought as there was no one else you cared for—and though for a moment I thought that he who has left us had some influence, still what you had told me settled *that*—and——"

"Yes, yes," she said hastily.

Mr. Tilney here came up with an air of mystery. "Tillotson," he said, "a word. What fine music that is! Fugle is next door but one to divine, ain't he? Whenever I hear that man he quite lifts me up."

In another half-hour the Tilney party were walking home. As they were getting their "things," Mr. Tillotson heard some one whisper to him, "Oh, once more forgive me!"

They walked home together slowly. "So sorry that you are going," Mrs. Tilney said, with what anybody who did not know her well would have supposed a smile of delight. "Shall quite miss you, Mr. Tillotson. Now you must promise us to come very soon again. Augusta here says she feels *improved* by knowing you. Good-bye, then. *Good*-bye, Mr. Tillotson."

They were at the gate of their house, among the luxuriant hedges and flowers which almost hid it. Augusta, who knew the keys of the human voice far better than she did those of regular music, threw some pathos into her voice. At this moment she felt some penitence for opportunities neglected, and wished that she had re-

nounced the military works and pomps for the more substantial blessings whose superior advantages she now saw.

The third girl stood behind them all, half up the walk leading to the house. Where the sisters were prominent it was understood and expected that she should keep retired. The moon was out. As a background there was the old house overgrown with great cushions of leaves, with lights in its small windows, and looking like a scene. The moonlight, too, fell upon her pale face, and lit her up like a tinted statue.

"Your kindness I shall not forget, Mr. Tilney. I must say good-bye to them." And he passed them and went up the walk.

"Good-bye," he said hastily. "Depend on my secrecy, as indeed you might suppose. Men do not publish their own mortifications."

"Forgive me!" she said again, very piteously. "Oh, forgive me! I have not told you everything. I dare not."

"Ah! *That* does not mend it much," he said, with deep grief and suffering. "It comes to the same thing. Unless," he added, almost imploringly, "it means that after some time—years even——"

She shook her head sadly. "No, no," she said, "I may not even say *that*. Ah! what *can* I do?"

Mr. Tillotson looked down. "Then so be it. Promise me this, at least, if ever you should want aid or assistance of any kind for yourself or for *them*, you will send for me. Will you promise me *that*, at least?"

The others had now reached him. "Good-bye again," they said; and passed into the house.

"I do, I do," she said eagerly.

"A solemn pledge, I mean," he said hurriedly, "not to be lightly spoken. Let me look to some little relation to you in the future. It will be a gleam of light before me. Oh, what infatuation! For these few weeks I actually thought the sun was coming and the sunny days, and that the clouds were all behind. Only one more delusion," he added, with a smile, "to put to the rest! Well, you promise?"

(Mrs. Tilney's voice was heard calling shrilly, "Ada!")

"I do, I do promise. Indeed I do! Don't think ill of me, but be indulgent. I cannot tell you everything. There, dear Mr. Tillotson, good-bye. God bless you, and make you happy."

She seemed to fade out. He saw her pass into the illuminated doorway, where the light was shed on her golden hair for the last time. Even then, and at that distance, he saw a sweet, grieved, and most wistful look turned to the darkness where he had been left. Then she was gone.

Mr. Tilney's loud voice seemed to waken him up. "Going back to town, going back to town, Tillotson?" he said, as if meditating. "Very well. Going back and plunging into the vortex! What would I take and change with you? Ah! No quiet for me,

Tillotson, until we get to our old friend over there," pointing at the old cathedral, now all but steeped in moonlight. "The one thing, you know, Tillotson. The only thing, after all!"

Mr. Tillotson, who by this time knew the course that these reflections would take, did not reply to them, but told Mr. Tilney a piece of news that was very gratifying to him. "The company have agreed to make you a director. I got the answer to-night. A paid director too."

He started with delight. "A director! My dear Tillotson, this is goodness! this is friendship! to get back to the old place. I shall be able to draw breath now. I am consumed, wasting in this hole." (In a second Mr. Tilney had forgotten the one thing necessary.)

Mr. Tillotson set him right on this point. "You shall hear more about it," he said. "I must go now. I have to set out early. Good-bye! Thanks for all kindness!"

"God bless you! *God* bless you, Tillotson!" Then the other walked back in the moonlight to desolation and to the White Hart, listening to the clock striking twelve, and thinking that with that hour ended a short dream of happiness. He sat long in his ancient room, which seemed as blank, as desolate, and even mouldy as his own heart. Sometimes he paced to and fro, and struck his forehead with his hand. "One more miserable delusion," he said. "Stupid, insensible, folly, folly, as well as guilt!" And so he sat on and walked until the cold morning light began to steal in through the ancient red curtain of the White Hart's window. By the first train, which left at six, he had gone—not to London, but to another town, where he was to stay a few hours, and then go up. Now all the white walls and cold penitential passages of the world were before him.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

"THE CAPTAIN'S" NIECES.

On the platform of the Waterloo station, where the trains were screaming in and screaming out, an elderly gentleman, that leaned on a stick and limped a little as he walked, was waiting for a particular train to come in. He was thin and stooped, had a very high Roman nose and well-curled brown whiskers, which gave him an almost warlike expression; but his blue eyes, with which he looked to the right and to the left, were the softest and gentlest in the world. They fell on the *al-fresco* bookseller, who was doing so large an open-air business in gamboge-covered books, and straps, and railway rugs, and opera-glasses, and the spare moments of whose life seemed to be employed in cutting leaves.

"Just out, Sir. Quite new," the bookseller said, touching with his paper-knife an orange-coloured book, as clean and fresh as a newly-baked loaf. It was, indeed, not an hour from its own oven.

The lame gentleman shook his head and smiled. "If you printed a little larger," he said, taking it up; "or, I suppose, if I were only twenty years younger——"

"Well, there's better paper and print now than there used to be," the other went on, cutting desperately. "We sell 'em by the bushel."

"And now let us see," said the gentleman, taking up a book, putting on a pair of glasses very low on his nose, and looking sideways at it. What is all this about? Thaddeus of Warsaw. God bless me! I am very glad of that—very. Why, that's a really fine work."

"A classic, Sir," said the bookseller, who had learned to read his customers like his books. "Considered a reg'lar classic. They don't write such things nowadays."

"Oh, I declare I must have Thaddeus," said the gentleman,

taking out his purse. "And I hope, Sir, you will sell a great many copies. I read it years ago, and was delighted with it. Two shillings! God bless me, how cheaply they bring out these things. How can they do it, the creatures, and keep themselves! There. Thank you." And he moved away, looking through the double glass still on his nose down at the gorgeously chromatic portrait of Thaddeus which was on the back of his yellow book. The bookseller looked after him with some interest, as he saw the deep respect of the gentleman for the story, and his sincere admiration for the outside picture.

He ran after him. "Let me tie it up for you, Sir, and put it in paper."

The gentleman thanked him warmly, and then put Thaddeus safely in his pocket.

He was presently leaning on his stick, talking to a porter, who was pointing here and there, and over to this building and that. He was telling about their professional life, and how their rounds of duty were managed, and how 'ard the work was, and how much "'arder paid." That led on into the duty of working signals, which led again to their curious mechanism.

"See that now! Most interesting and curious!" said the gentleman, in pleased wonder. "And tell me, now, what sort of lighthouse is that up there? The poor people seem to me to live up there altogether."

"If you step this way," the man said, mysteriously, "I'll show you the whole thing, Sir. Nobody ain't allowed to get down on the line," he added, with a great air of suspicion; "but *I'll* manage it. The superintendent's at his dinner." And in a very short time the gentleman was limping quietly up some steep steps, and was actually up in the glass roost where men pull at iron handles all day and night long. There a chair had been rubbed clean; and with his chin on the top of his stick he was presently in free and pleasant conversation with the chief of that little establishment and the whole staff. When he went away, it was agreed in that little community that he was "as nice a friendly sort of gentleman as you could ask to meet."

It will have been seen, from these two trifling little incidents, that this lame gentleman was one of the few who have the delightful art of attracting the common passers on the highway of life without any trouble, who get a kindly nod even if they cannot stop, and who have that surprisingly useful gift of making a friend of the man with whom they stand under an archway during a shower of rain. The name of this gentleman was Diamond—Captain Thomas Diamond, of the Royal Veteran Battalion.

"I am waiting," he said to the friendly porter, with whom he was now on the most confidential terms, "for two ladies, nieces of mine, and I have never seen them since they were that high. And

really now, I don't know how I shall make them out when they do come."

It was a puzzling thing, but it often occurred; someway, it always came right, the porter said. "There was a look about them by which you knew. You saw two young women a-getting out of the train, and you knew at once they were *your* young women."

The captain owned there was good sense in this observation, founded, as it was, on an extensive experience of human nature. "I dare say you are right," he said. "'Pon my word, there is a great deal of sense in what you say."

"You just take your stand, it may be there, Sir," said the porter, illustrating his remark, and encouraged by this praise, "and look out for the first two young women you see standing in the open door, or lookin' up and down the line for some one. And they'll be your two young women—I'll lay you a crown."

This allusion to the coin might have been accidental, but it gave a sort of hint to Captain Diamond, who thanked him very warmly for his kindness, and took something out of his purse, which he gave with great mystery, not wishing publicly to violate the company's regulations.

The train was now seen far off along the platform, and in a moment there was a rush of officials from private doors, and a restlessness in drivers and horses and cabs, a backing, and a pirouetting, and a gesticulating, while every one was looking out at the edge, as if a ship were coming alongside the pier. And in a moment the train came in, rumbling and rolling, and making the roof reverberate; and the engine was pulled up suddenly, shedding steam and dew, and dripping like an exhausted racer. In a second doors flew open, and the platform seemed to have generated a new race of men and women, who came into a cold world with cloaks and wrappers and caps on, and baskets in their hands.

The porter had, indeed, shown a profound instinct; for, exactly as he had foretold, the captain saw two ladies in the doorway of a carriage, looking up and down anxiously. Often afterwards he would begin praising railway porters heartily for their instinct and "willingness," saying they were the most intelligent class of men in the world.

The captain limped up to the door, and touching his hat—he was a little near-sighted, and always read with spectacles—which was a little like a bishop's, said, with great deference, "I beg your pardon, but perhaps you are looking for——"

"It is uncle," cried the elder of the ladies. "Uncle Diamond, we are your nieces."

"Ah! I thought so," he said, taking both their hands, and helping them out, "and I am so glad, my dears."

The younger, with a very fairy-like face, and an eager, restless manner, who was small, bright, and black-eyed, now broke in

without preface: "And I am so glad! But, oh, Uncle Diamond, such a dreadful thing has happened to us; we don't know what to do."

"God bless me," said the Captain, starting back, "what is it?"

"We have lost everything. I could sit down and cry; and after all our miseries and misfortunes to have this! And we don't know what to do, uncle."

"Never mind, my dear," said he, without knowing what they meant, "we'll get it again. It will all come right again in the morning."

"It is a great misfortune for poor little Alice. We were getting some tea in the refreshment-room," said the elder, quickly, "and she laid down our bag, and forgot it."

"The train went off so suddenly," the other said, "and they hurried us on. But what *are* we to do? for it had all our money in the world, and darling mamma's picture and her letters, oh, Uncle Diamond, Uncle Diamond!" And the little girl wrung her hands bitterly.

Uncle Diamond soothed her tenderly. It would all come right, he said, depend on it. What was the station—what was the place? There was really a most intelligent fellow here among the porters, and suppose they consulted him——

"There is a chance," said the elder, "you know there is. The gentleman——"

"Yes, uncle," said the younger, "a gentleman that was with us bravely jumped out when the train was moving, and, I fear, has hurt himself dreadfully."

"He'll look after it, depend on it," said the Captain, with affected cheerfulness and confidence. "To be sure he will! He's sure not to be hurt. Here's our sagacious friend, he'll tell us what to do."

The sagacious friend at first seemed to doubt the truth of the story, for he said it was "teetotally agin the laws of the company that any one should leap out when the train was in motion." When Captain Diamond proposed telegraphing to the station, he said it was no use, as he had come on—most likely. At last, however, he advised coming back in about an hour and a half, when the next train was due, and in all probability he would come by that—supposing "he was let." They determined to wait there. The elder, dismissing the bag from her thoughts, talked calmly with her uncle about their affairs, and her journey, and other things. But the younger, excited, restless, eager, kept running to the waiting-room door, and looking out wistfully until the time had passed. Once more the signals began to toss their arms violently, and a distant bell to sound. Then came in a St. Alans train, which, as before, opened its sides, and broke into life with all the quickness of a pantomime trick. The two girls stood, each leaning on an arm of their uncle. Both faces were full of anxiety; but the younger leant forward.

fluttering as if she were going to fly, and searching every face she met. Captain Diamond had first thought of applying the skilful advice of the porter to the present case, but broke down in a moment, bewildered by the crowd of faces. But the two sisters were at work. Suddenly the younger broke from her uncle's arm, and called out,

"There, there he *is*! I see him. Oh, uncle, uncle, look!"

"And see," said the other, calmly, "he has got our bag all safe. I can see it in his hand."

"And oh, sister," said the younger girl, "he is safe. He looks quite safe. Oh, it would have been dreadful had he been hurt."

"Where, where, dears?" said the Captain, now quite bewildered, and looking a little wildly at everybody. "Egad, I can see nothing. Though, to be sure, I don't know him yet."

"Oh, and you will thank him," said the younger. "Won't you, uncle? Here he is."

"Why, Heaven preserve us, it's Tillotson!—or is it?" said he, as that gentleman came up. "Ay! ay! My dear friend Tillotson, is this you? Ah, why I know him, dears. You are not hurt, are you, my dear fellow?"

"Here is the bag," said Mr. Tillotson. "It had a very narrow escape. Some one was walking away with it just as I entered."

"How shall we ever thank you?" the young girl said, earnestly and with sparkling eyes. "And oh! you were in such dreadful danger, too."

"Yes," said Mr. Tillotson, gravely. "I am afraid it was rather a mad act. Had it been you, or your friend, or a fellow-creature, there would have been some excuse. As it is, I perhaps deserve to lose my life for such a trick."

The young girl seemed hurt and awed by this speech, and shrank away to her uncle's arm.

"So," he went on, "Captain Diamond, you know these ladies?"

"Know them!" said the Captain, smiling, "Egad! I do, well. They are my new nieces, just come to me from France, and who are to do me the honour of staying with me. I am going to give up being a solitary good-for-nothing bachelor *in sæculorum*, Sir. But, now, wasn't it the oddest thing in the world that you should come across them, and that we three should come to know each other in this sort of way? I really can hardly make it out."

"Oh, uncle, and if you knew how kind this gentleman has been, how he risked his safety to help us," said the young girl, with a wonderful fervour and a half-shy air, and addressing this speech, not to her uncle, but to Mr. Tillotson.

But he had become abstracted. "As I said before, you make too much of it. It is a mere trifle."

"So is everything good that you do a mere trifle, Tillotson," said Captain Diamond, eagerly. "If he gives a hundred pounds to a

charity, it is a trifle. If he does some other fine thing, that is a trifle also. *We* don't think them trifles, I can tell you, Tillotson."

Mr. Tillotson was looking up and down wearily. "I must go and look after my things," he said. "I am glad to have been of some use to somebody. But I hope you won't think of it any more." He bowed to the ladies, and went away.

The young girl looked after him wistfully, and with mortification in her face. "He won't let us thank him even, uncle," she said, despondingly. "How odd of him! One would think we had offended him."

"That is only his way, my dear," said the Captain, earnestly. "He is the most noble, generous, amiable fellow. I am so glad he has come back. And you must help me to shake him up, dears, for his life is very gloomy. You don't know all he has gone through. Some of these evenings, when we are all sitting by the fire, and you, dears, have nothing better to do than to listen to me, I'll tell you about him. Now shall we get a cab?"

"Oh, then he *has* a history," said the younger girl, eagerly.

"Poor, poor fellow!" said Captain Diamond, with deep feeling. "But come, we have had no time to talk to each other. Let me look at you, dears. I am so glad to have you with me; I am indeed. And now you won't mind waiting here while I go and get the luggage?"

And Captain Diamond, putting them in a safe place under the clock and out of the crowd, limped away towards the luggage van, looking back now and again to encourage them.

CHAPTER II.

MR. TILLOTSON'S HOME.

MR. TILLOTSON had left the White Hart very early. It was a gloomy, shivering morning, and as an ancient country fly drove him up to the station, he saw the great cathedral looking uncomfortably through a bluish atmosphere. He went his way out of that town more hopeless and cheerless than he had entered it.

He had a lonely carriage—one all to himself—from whose window he could see all the objects of the country; the raw stone houses, the cold bridges, the stray brick house standing by itself (emblem of his own condition), sweeping by, all wrapped in the same blue uncomfortable morning tone. He looked back, and he saw the same tone upon his whole life; he looked forward, and it was there before

him also. He might have been in a penitential cell, and could not have been more dull and hopeless.

Gradually the day began to brighten. They passed many towns and stations. At a great junction they stopped, and he got out, and he felt so dismal and so disinclined to his own company, that he thought he would walk about, and go on by another train. He walked about the place listlessly, scarcely saw anything beyond the signs and labels of shops, and came back in time for a later train. The later train took up people who had come on from the Continent. He found it full of travellers, with the marks of the rough usage of the steam-packet upon them, with more of wrappings and packages than there was of the traveller, and very different from the fresh, smooth, well-brushed company who came in and got out all along the road. These seemed to be invalids fresh out of an hospital.

In this crowded train Mr. Tillotson had been "put" where there were some ordinary travellers, and where there were two tired ladies, with wraps and packages and a weary jaded air, which showed that they also had come from the sea. One was young, black-haired, and bright-eyed; those eyes were brighter yesterday, and would be as bright on the morrow. The other was elderly, cold cheeked, sharp faced, and about eight-and-thirty. To-morrow or yesterday would not make much difference in her looks. Mr. Tillotson sat opposite the younger black-haired girl, saw that she was restless and talkative, and carried a bag carefully on her knee. When she was not talking, she had her eyes very often fixed upon him.

They were tired with their voyage, and talked of its troubles; at least the elder, who was always tired and worn, seemed to have some extra lines and shades of fatigue on her face. She spoke very little; the other, with a curious eagerness and vivacity. Mr. Tillotson, after a few moments or so, had dropped them out of his view, and was soon in as perfect solitude as when he was alone in the carriage.

The younger girl was always wondering and supposing whether some event would happen, or where they were going—a kind of wonder that was put half in the shape of a question, and always with an inquiring look at the calm dreamy unconscious face that was opposite to her.

He was soon awoke into life by a voice saying, "Perhaps this gentleman would tell us?" He started. It was only some common question about the time of arrival. He had a kind of half sad voice, which had got this key from the habitual tone of his mind, and the younger girl listened with deep attention while he told them the little he knew. He then relapsed. But she was restless again very soon, and had another question; and on the question followed a little narrative of a couple of sentences long. "We have lived a good deal abroad, and are coming home now; so we are very ignorant of everything. It seems much drearier," she went on, looking out of the window. "There seems no sun here."

"Why do you return?" he said. "I have been abroad also, and could fancy being very happy there. You should have stayed where the sun is brightest. We should all keep in it while we can."

The two were silent for a moment. The younger sighed; then the other spoke. "We are obliged, unfortunately, to return. Our last friend died six months ago at Dieppe."

Then Mr. Tillotson, for the first time, saw that they were in mourning. He looked on them both with deep interest and compassion. The younger girl read these feelings in his face, which seemed to warm up. "I am very inconsiderate," he said. "I did not mean to put such foolish questions. But the fact is, I live out of the world as much as if I were in one of the little French towns."

He was not at all disinclined to talk now, for he felt drawn towards these two girls whose situation was like his own. There was a frankness and freedom, almost childish, about the younger, which was really pleasing, and she told about their affairs and misfortunes with a confidence that was often wisdom. The elder was her half-sister. They were going to stay with an uncle whom they had not seen for years. There was a generous sympathy, and an invitation to confidence, in Mr. Tillotson's manner. Gradually other passengers dropped out, and the three were left in the carriage. They fell on their Dieppe life, and how happy they had been at that town, then not spoiled by fashion and exorbitant prices—it was the bright black-eyed girl who was narrating their little history—but she could not get further. Her eyes filled up suddenly, and, biting her lips, she looked at the trees and houses flying past the window. They were stopping. It was another junction, and she jumped up hastily. "Come," she said to her sister, "let us get some tea!"

Mr. Tillotson, though young enough, had lost the enthusiasm that would have made him fly from the carriage and return with a cup in each hand. He let the two ladies pass from the carriage, and remained behind, still thinking of many things. He might have been sitting before a cold grate, looking hopelessly into the sunk-down ashes.

When the bell rang, they came back hurriedly. The tea, as was usual with such tea, was hot and thin, and unlike known tea. They settled themselves in their places, and the bright-eyed girl was about describing pleasantly what had been given her to drink, when, with the first jerk of the moving train, she gave a cry, and clasped her hand. "The bag!" she cried. "I have left it in the refreshment-room—all our money—everything!" She started up and ran to the window. Mr. Tillotson, suddenly aroused from a dream of St. Alans, was saying calmly that it was sure to be found, when she called out, "And our mother's picture, and all her letters! What *shall* I do?"

He rose hastily from his seat, opened the door in a second, and, though the train was beginning to move a little fast, had jumped upon the platform. But there was an iron pillar, one of a long series that kept up the roof, and against this he was swung, and the two sisters, who with clasped hands had rushed to the open door, saw him stagger back as if he had been struck by some blow. That was the last view they had of him; and this was the little story they told the Captain.

They were never weary of repeating their thanks, at least the youngest, the Captain saying that "it was really, now, as gallant a thing as he had ever heard of. Just fancy, my dears," he went on, "if you had Tom there, with his old leg in the way. And I am so glad, Tillotson, it was *you*, now. 'Pon my word I am."

At this moment their maid, a tall, gaunt, rudely-made, masculine woman, came up, and said that all their "things were in." The Captain saw the eyes of the young girl wistfully following the retreating figure of Mr. Tillotson. Something struck him, and he limped hastily after him. "My dear fellow," he said, "I beg your pardon. Now, where are you going? To the chambers?"

"Yes," said Mr. Tillotson, smiling sadly, "to the old den."

"You won't be settled down there till to-morrow," said the other, anxiously; "and I tell you what, now, come and dine with us. As good a duck, Tillotson, as ever was killed, and a little haddock. Do, my dear fellow. It'll be a charity to help an old fellow to amuse those two nice girls——"

"Some other day, some other time," said Mr. Tillotson, wringing his hand. "You are too good to me. But another time."

"Ah! this is always the way. You are such a stand-off man. Well, the next day. Give us *one* day—the day after to-morrow."

"I will, then, my dear Captain," said he; and at last got away. He got into his cab, and in a few moments it became for him a cell as gloomy as the carriage had been. The darkness was now setting in, and with the departure of bright day, yet gloomier thoughts, which had kept themselves in reserve, began to rush on him. Then the cab stopped at some old-fashioned chambers, in an old-fashioned run-to-seed square. The old chambers were handsome enough, having been once a nobleman's house, and had a "grand stair" that was magnificent. But they were not let, and were even going out of fashion—as unfashionable quiet chambers. The air of that great hall and stair seemed charged with ghosts of spectral noble men and noble women, who had attended routs and parties, and crowded up in George the Second's day.

A porter, who sat in a black-hooded chair, put on an affectation of decent joy at his return, and went before him up the white stone staircase. That was an ascent of time, and he had to shade the light from the grand draughts which floated up and down. It was a lonely passage; they did not meet a soul. Thus what had been the

noble lady's boudoir was reached, where a fire was indeed burning, but smoking, and having a cold air; and then the porter went down to wait upon other gentlemen, and, closing the door, left Mr. Tillotson to the company of cold shadows and ghosts for the night.

CHAPTER III.

MORE ABOUT "THE CAPTAIN."

CAPTAIN DIAMOND had genteel lodgings in Wimpole Street, where he had lived many years, and where he was regarded with a mixture of respect and affection by all who were concerned in the establishment. By the landlady who took his monthly rent; by the maid-servant who brought up his breakfast—he dined always at his club—whom he remembered sumptuously at the pecuniary festivals; and by the occasional lodger whom he met on the stairs, and who was coming down from cheaper regions, very much up stairs. The inquirer below was told that "the Captain" was in, or would be in by-and-by; it was for "the Captain" that breakfast went up, and for "the Captain" that the servant ran out in her cap round the corner. For by this name he was affectionately known, though in truth, he was only a lieutenant, but a lieutenant in the enjoyment of full pay, having quitted the army forty years before. That transaction was, in truth, something of "a job," and would not bear a moment's inquiry now. But at that time, the Captain's sweet temper and plain goodness had made for him many fast friends in his own profession; among others, Sir Thomas Cameron, then Colonel Cameron, who afterwards got to the Horse Guards, and got Tom Diamond into the "Royal Veteran Battalion," with full pay, without a second's hesitation. He was himself very merry on the score of this corps, whom he called "the Fogies."

Often and often he met old brother-officers of this type, who greeted him with delight and affection unusual among men, and who pressed him obstreperously to dine with them and stay with them. And if he ever wanted money he had no lack of friends to look to.

The fiction of the captaincy, which was so scrupulously supported by those below him, always gave him a little pain. "I have no right to it," he said very earnestly and simply. "And they may well laugh at me; but what can I do? It is so hard to explain, and to be explaining it every time. And they do it out of good-nature, you know." His friends were very earnest on this point, and held to this dignity as it it were a point of faith. But he never would adopt

it on his card, or endorse the little deceit in his own writing, but was always plain "Mr. Thomas Diamond."

Besides being the friend of Colonel Cameron—afterwards Sir Thomas, K.C.B.—he had known plenty of dashing officers of the Prince Regent's era—such as Colonel Lascelles, Captain King—afterwards General King, and governor of islands—Trevylian, and many more. The Captain had a surprising delicacy and unselfish sensitiveness, and though often led on to talk pleasantly of his exploits with those officers, beginning with evident pleasure, yet would check himself timorously, as if he were wearying his hearers with his "old stories." And though they were indeed entertaining, and full of colour and character, he could only be got to go on, under protest, as it were, and with a struggle between two feelings—that of fearing to disoblige or of tiring—which was almost amusing. There was a family or two with whom he was distantly connected, and where there were children, and by them his coming was always looked for as a holiday, and on the day of the visit videttes, posted at the window, looked out anxiously towards six o'clock for the half-stooping figure that came limping up so quietly yet so steadily to the door, and with a cry and a united scamper, gave notice that the Captain was at hand. By elders of this family he was sometimes called "Tom," and by the younger ones he was sometimes, with glowing cheeks and a blush of shame and humiliation, taken in confidence with reference to sudden pecuniary embarrassments. On such occasions the nobility and the delicacy of the Captain's behaviour excited a tumult of delight—a delight that could not find words. For the Captain had an old crimson silk purse, made for him out of an officer's sash by a lady years ago, which came out, and in which his thin pale fingers explored. Gratitude was on *his* face at the kind confidence that had been reposed.

"Now, my dear fellow," he would say, diving into the narrow opening of the long crimson purse, "this is what I like. This is really what I am proud of! Now mind, if you do not *always* come to me in this way, you and I are two."

But the real time of jubilee was when "Tom," coming back from the country with a small modest old black portmanteau, would be induced to stay a night or two with one of these families. For he always gave leave to his landlady, who, he said, was a "poor struggling creature," to let his rooms in his absence, and sometimes his return would come about awkwardly, in the very middle of such a lodger's tenure, so that he would feel himself bound to go to an hotel for a night or two, or to accept the hospitality of these friends as described. They would sometimes remonstrate with him a little warmly on this weakness, saying, "If I were you I wouldn't do it. It's perfect folly of you! I think you are far too good, Uncle Tom. I wouldn't put myself out in that way, or let myself be made a hand of in that way, and by a woman of that sort." To which

Uncle Tom would, with a little confusion, plead his old excuse, "Ah, the creature! she has to struggle so to make up her little rent and taxes. My dear, it's no trouble in the world to me. I rather like going to the hotel."

"Turning you out of your *own* room!" the lady would go on, warmly, "your *own* room, for which you have paid!"

"Ah, the creature," Uncle Tom would say again. "A fellow that was in the front parlour went off three weeks ago, and owing her a month's rent, which she was counting on to pay her taxes, the creature! I assure you she was crying for an hour in the room, telling it to me."

"And of course you paid them for her?" said the indignant lady. "I am ashamed of you. You are like a child about your money. It should be taken from you, and kept for you."

"No, no, upon my word, no," said the Captain very eagerly. "No, no. I am not that sort of man. I would not do *that* for her. 'Pon my word, no."

But there was a belief that amounted to certainty in the minds of all there that he had paid the crying landlady's taxes; as indeed he had. And with this he was not in the least soft or foolish. Among these stories, which he was reluctant to relate, were several associated with the shape of "Satisfaction" then in fashion among gentlemen, in one of which he himself had been principal, and out of which he had come, as the phrase went, "with flying colours." But in many more he had assisted as "friend" with great "pluck" and tact, and either pushed the affair to extremities, or arranged it happily, as the occasion required. Some of these which bore a little against himself—as in the instance of the constable's coming up and arresting him, to his astonishment, as he stepped out of the coach, with a shining mahogany case under his arm—he told with much humour and happy simplicity.

The children, however, would always look upon him as a great commander, and for a long time associated the lameness with a mysterious wound received in battle. Their eager and earnest questions on this subject he often turned off with a smile, but though often pressed for details of the action, could never be induced to enter upon it. The parents' eyes were always on him, and through that wonderful delicacy with which he was leavened through and through, he felt that in some way their dignity and pleasure required that the little legend should be kept up. And so it was, until one of the boys, growing up, asked him in a sort of confidential way, as between man and man, and then it came out that "Tom" had got his injury leaping across a ditch with his gun, when he had put his hip "out." In truth, he was always in gentle protest against these military "honours" which his friends would affectionately press on him for his reputation with the public.

It was quite natural, therefore, when he heard of his relation

dying at Dieppe, and leaving these two girls, that he should think of hurrying over to help them. But he got ill suddenly, and was shut up in his room for weeks, during which time the maid and landlady attended on the Captain anxiously, and an old military doctor—Gilpin of the —th—came, and went as he came, sturdily refusing fees. During this season the patient suffered deep distress of mind, apologising often for all the trouble he was giving. But he was strong, and very soon was "on his legs" again. Then he wrote to the two orphan girls, insisting that they should come to him—for a time at least; that it would be a real favour; that they would oblige him and cheer up an old fellow by their society; until these girls—what with their grief scarcely yet abated, and not allowing them to think much over anything—began actually to believe this uncle of theirs, whom they had never yet seen, was a poor lonely cast-off man, actually pining for human company. He made all preparations with the delicacy of a woman, transacted matters with his landlady for increased accommodation, and even made out a little maid to look after their dresses and dressing. No one was so thoughtful, clever, skilful, and successful in managing, as "the Captain."

He kissed them as he got them home. "I am so glad to have you both. And so this is the little heiress?"

Her bright eyes were shooting about restlessly, and she laughed with great enjoyment. As soon as she had turned away again—for a new object attracted her every moment—the other drew Captain Diamond aside, and whispered hurriedly:

"Don't say anything, dear uncle, about the property to *her*. I'll tell you afterwards."

The Captain, with a wise and almost knowing expression, squeezed her arm. "I forgot! Leave it to me," he said.

The Captain had arranged everything at his lodgings for the two ladies. The accommodation was happily of that expansive kind which would fit any number of guests; and in counsel with his landlady, and all the time fingering his sash purse nervously, he had entered into a treaty for her best rooms. Though the change was profitable to herself, she did not regard it with much favour, and upbraided him a little impatiently. As if, she said, he had not enough to do to take care of himself! Ladies—relations or no relations—were quite fit to look after themselves. That was her idea.

The Captain was getting alarmed. It would be fatal if the landlady had prejudices against his charges. "My dear Mrs. Wilcox," he said, "you don't know what trouble they are in. I don't think they have a friend now on the face of the earth that they can ask to do a hand's turn for them but myself, Mrs. Wilcox! And only think, they have a lawsuit with it all, which has gone against them so far. So we must be very tender with them, you see."

He had been busy, therefore, for some days before their coming, arranging things, trying to set out the drawing-room, so as to have

less of an old bachelor air, and getting in a handsome supply of all manner of stores. A little queer quaint old garde de vin, the gift of Sir Thomas—then Colonel—Cameron, and which lay under the sideboard, had been replenished. This little piece of furniture, it once occurred to the Captain, had "legs" infinitely too long, and, fetching out his tools, at which he was very fairly skilful, he had devoted a whole day to laborious shortening of these limbs, and produced a monument of amateur carpentry.

Both the ladies who had come to him called him uncle, though only the eldest Miss Diamond was his niece proper. The younger, Alice, was only the daughter of a nephew. Miss Diamond was rather tall, a little gaunt and thin, with a staid cold manner, and a practical turn of mind. She spoke very little, and was always steadily engaged on some work of solid and arduous character, from which she often looked up to let her cold eyes settle on a speaker, and see whether he seriously meant more than he said. It was only when they returned to the young girl that a tinge of softness and warmth came into them, and she tried to modulate the rich harsh key of her voice.

Alice was about two-and-twenty, but looked seventeen, for she had an almost childish face and figure. The face was pale, so oval, that, when years came on, it would surely grow sharp and pointed. She had a tiny waist, and "no *chest*" to speak of. Elderly maidens said that she had a "flighty" manner, and had been badly brought up. She had indeed a restless way of speaking, and a pretty volubility and freedom of comment not pleasant to "well-brought-up" elderly persons. She was very fond of gold and silver trinkets, and of decking herself out with laces and such things: the whole of which was to be laid to the account of her being spoiled by her friends calling her "the little heiress;" it being known for several years that she was to succeed to the great Davis property—a succession now, alas! very doubtful.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE CAPTAIN'S" NEW MENAGE.

When he had thus got them home he was delighted. By that time they discovered what a soft and gentle nature his was. The elder girl, or woman, was of a calm business-like temper, and fell into the "ways" of the house within an hour.

Alice went about at first in a sort of little enthusiasm. She

hurried from this room into that, and praised everything eagerly. But presently the enthusiasm abated, and she was sitting on a chair silent, and with her eyes roaming absently. The Captain was restless himself. He limped about the room, settling this thing and that, stopping before them every now and then to say:

"Now I hope, dears, you will make yourselves comfortable, and do what you like. And as for the rhino"—this was a familiar word of his, and he held up the crimson purse—"we won't spare him. When this is run out, we know where to look for more,—and more to the back of that."

"You are so good and kind, uncle," said Anne, quietly. The other went over and kissed him, then sat down again.

"You know," said he, wistfully, "I am so ignorant of all this. An old bachelor, living by himself so long, gets rusty. It will be a real kindness, dears, if you will take all *this* off my shoulders." And he held up the crimson purse. "I don't know prices, and they will impose on me. Will you promise me, dears, and help an old fellow?"

Yet for one who was so dull and helpless in housekeeping matters, he had ordered a surprising little dinner. Uncle Tom had been in Paris shortly after the peace time, and had often supped at houses of great repute with his friend (then) Colonel Cameron. Some of his best stories were founded on his adventures in that country, where, indeed, though blundering sadly, he had won the respect of the natives. They said he was bon enfant after all.

At this little inauguration dinner, too, we may be sure there was the most inspiring wine to give a sparkle to their meeting. The elder girl told him about their Dieppe life; and when the dinner was gone, and they were at the fire again, told him, to his deep sympathy, about the later and more distressful passage in that Dieppe life, which he accompanied with many an "Indeed I know! Oh yes! My poor children!" using his amber Indian handkerchief very often. The younger girl sat with her knee held within her clasped hands, listening mournfully, but she added no details to the narrative.

"Ah! you poor things, all alone there," said Uncle Tom, poking the fire violently. "Why didn't you write to me? I had only to get into the train, and then the packet. I'm the best sailor in the world. But those doctors kept me. I'd like to have seen old Dieppe again. What a gay place it used to be. And the Eaterbleesemong? We stayed a night there, I and Colonel Cameron, and bought some of their ivory-work—along the Port—to bring home. The colonel and I were walking along the pier, when an old fisherman, or fisherwoman, egad, we couldn't tell which, they dressed so alike——But I always *will* get into my old stories. But, my dear girls, you must keep up. Every one, they tell us, has their little peck of trouble. Look at poor Tillotson, that got you your bag——"

Now a little colour came into Alice's face. The hands were

unclasped, and the knee fell. "And what dreadful thing has he suffered, uncle?" she asked.

"Oh, a long business, dear—as long as one of my old stories. I know all about it. And I believe it is a sort of secret—a secret that everybody knows—but I suppose I may tell you, dears; they won't hang me for it."

"He has it in his face," said the young girl eagerly. "I was sure there was a mystery there."

"Poor fellow!" said the Captain, reflectively; "I know the whole thing. His uncle, Colonel Tillotson, was in a regiment with me at the time, and was dreadfully distressed about it. And he changed for foreign service soon after, and I don't think ever quite got over it. Dear me!"

"And what was it, uncle?" pressed the young girl. "Won't you tell us?"

"Well, it was this: Henry Tillotson was a wild foolish young fellow. We were all that, I'm afraid, in our day; it used to be the fashion, you know. But every one was talking of him, and I am afraid, dears, he was anything but what you call respectable. His mother was a quiet, gentle creature, and tried all she could with him; and his father threatened him, even. Colonel Tillotson, then captain, often spoke to me about it, and I had every stage of the business. The mother, poor thing, I saw was fretting herself to death about it. But my lad went on from bad to worse. Now, would you ever think it of that gentle-looking fellow?"

"Scarcely," the eldest answered, firmly.

Alice did not reply but eagerly waited for more.

"It's a queer world, you know, dears. Oh! it was very unfortunate altogether," uncle Diamond went on, sadly. "And yet I believe nobody was so much in fault, after all. After one of the breakouts, worse than usual, there was a scene, and his father regularly turned him out; went further I think than he ought to have done. The poor woman fell down half dead, and her son ran to her, distracted; but Tillotson—the father, I mean—put him out very harshly, I think. The son went away, desperately, to foreign countries. And then there was the *other business*. But these are all dismal old stories, my dear."

There was a silence for a few moments. The young girl remained in her favourite attitude, her hands clasped round her knee, and her eyes fixed devotionally on the teller of the history. They were tired with their journey, and presently went to bed.

For a long time after, the captain sat at his fire, smiling pleasantly in great good-humour, smoking his clay pipe, and addressing a chasm in the live coals with a sympathising "The creatures! the creatures!"

CHAPTER V.

A NEW INTEREST.

BEFORE breakfast the next morning he was down and busy, limping about from the fire to the table, deep in hot rolls, and hot muffins, and toast, and various fried things that were simmering before the fire. In the morning the Captain was always particularly bright and almost glittering, being surprisingly smoothly shaved, and his whiskers oiled and curled to glossiness—an operation which he performed with a small French iron, purchased in Paris during that visit after the peace. For "the Captain" took care of everything he had, and kept it to a surprising age. He shaved himself with wonderful smoothness, and took great pride in his razors, the sharpening and stropping of which instruments, for friends, was a favourite pastime of his during the long evenings. He always wore a high black satin stock which buckled behind, and out of which rose his sharply pointed collars—everything about his throat being braced up with military stiffness. About these little points—namely, about "the Captain's" collars, and "the Captain's" razors, and such matters, the servants were jealously and mysteriously careful, and even took pride; though, indeed, it was not likely that the good and gentle soul would be angered by any neglect in such matters.

This morning, then, the Captain was down early, busy with the cares of preparing a breakfast, that for quantity would have sufficed for a party of tired and hungry troopers; for he was of that old school that deems lavish hospitality to be the highest and most perfect expression of love, friendship, kindliness, and the heartiest good will. His niece, however, was with him in a moment.

"You recollect," she said, "dear uncle, what I whispered to you at the railway station, about not mentioning the trial to Alice. Poor child, she does not know of it yet."

He stopped short in his walk. "Well, so best, so best! I see now, though I didn't then, I confess. I thought I might have been putting my old foot in it, as I do sometimes. Well, it would only worry the poor thing, after all."

"That was what we thought. She will know it in full time; though Heaven knows how we are to tell her. Her poor little soul is set upon being an heiress. And oh, uncle," she went on, laying down her work, "I have yet worse to tell you about her."

"Worse? God bless me!" ejaculated the Captain.

"About three weeks before we came away she began to complain, all of a sudden, of restless nights, and that she couldn't lie on her side. Well, we got all the French doctors, and they came and examined her, and one of them, the cleverest man in Dieppe, told me

plainly that he thought one of her lungs was 'touched,' and that we must be very careful of her."

The Captain looked wistfully at his shining copper kettle, now singing merrily on the hob. He did not know what to say for a moment. "Ah, my dear," he said, "those French doctors are all botches, regular botches. My God!—surely there was poor Hammond, who went up with me in the dilijongs, and who felt some stings about his heart. Boulay, the French doctor, told him he couldn't last a month—not a month. Well, Hammond lived twenty years after that, and was sound as a roach in his heart to the day of his death; though, to be sure, we might have very well misunderstood the gentleman, for, between you and me, my dear, we couldn't muster half-a-crown's worth of French between us."

"Ah, but, uncle, an English doctor says the same."

"Well," said he, a little nonpulsed, "many of *them*, too, are botches enough, God knows. I tell you what, my dear. We'll just take a cab and go off straight to Doctor Gilpin, as good a man as ever stepped. I know what *he*'ll say. Little Alice touched, my dear! Folly!"

Thus he dismissed those fears; he fell very soon with delight into this new life. The two girls made him their study, made little alterations which they thought would bring him more comfort, little surprises which threw "the Captain" into almost a distress of gratitude and acknowledgment.

One of those first days he came to the elder girl. "I am going to ask you to help me," he said. "Do you know, I am *afraid* they make a fool of me in shops and such places. I am sure I give double what I ought to give. Now, my dear child, I want you to help me."

"Dearest uncle," the elder girl said, "this *is* kind. I am so glad you have come to me. I was dying to ask you."

"Then here," said he, pulling out his crimson purse, "would you, then, take charge of this? Lay out whatever is enough for the week, and spare nothing, mind. I like everything of the *very best*, and *plenty* of the best. It's a way I have always had. I'll look after the wines *myself*," Uncle Tom added, apologetically. "For I *think* I know a little about wine. Colonel Cameron and I always went together to the vaults to taste. There, there, you are doing me a *great* favour. And he put the crimson silk purse into her hands, and limped away hastily.

The younger girl was still silent and quiet. That morning she asked her uncle would he come out and take her for a walk. She wanted to see some of the shows of London. Her uncle was thankful and grateful for this honour done to him. He received this lady's orders with the old gallantry of Louis the Fourteenth's day. He went to fetch his finest apparel, and the bishop's hat, which lay under a bandanna handkerchief, for occasions of state, and the grey

thread gloves which rested on the curl of the bishop's hat. The two sallied out; the bright-looking girl in deep black leaning on the arm of the gouty, fierce, half-military old gentleman, who limped smartly along.

On the next night came Mr. Tillotson, still looking ill. But he was making an effort. "Doing too much," said the Captain, looking at him anxiously. "You must take care of yourself. 'Proper vitum,' thus something goes on in that way, but old Stubbs, our schoolmaster in the country, was always saying it. It means, that it is very foolish to be losing one's life entirely for work. He always rolled it out like thunder. But he was an uncommon good scholar, I can tell you; which between you and me and the post, dears"—a favourite colloquialism of the Captain's—"I never was."

It was a very "nice" little dinner, which, with a pardonable inconsistency (minding his declaration as to the incompetency), the Captain had wholly "designed" himself. But by way of suggestion; as, for instance: "Don't you think, my dear, that a roast duck would be a good thing? I don't know a better thing, in its way, than 'the apron' of a duck and green peas."

Mr. Tillotson talked agreeably, and tried hard to talk agreeably. He told them about the cathedral town, then about his travels somewhere abroad. To which the Captain listened devoutly, nodding his head now and again, and saying: "See that, now. Most entertaining. Like a book, I declare!" The young girl scarcely spoke, but kept her eyes fixed on him; which Mr. Tillotson was quite conscious of, and seemed to resist in a little way, for he kept his face turned away from her all the night, and addressed himself more to the elder Miss Diamond. This ground she tried very often to recover, with all sorts of restless arts, starting into the middle of sentences, and sometimes breaking into a curious volubility. But without the least effect. Did Mr. Tillotson, who was very sensitive, detect the meaning that lay under this sort of attention, or did he suspect unreasonably? Rude, or even politely neglectful, he could not be. But there was an indistinct manner of his, which, to her, was quite intelligible. Captain Diamond, however, had little instinct of it.

"I am very glad to have you in this way," he said, "and it is very kind of you to come. I can't tell you how you entertain us. Don't he, Alice? It brings up the places, you know. Don't it, Alice?"

"Yes, yes, uncle," said she eagerly. "I see it all perfectly—as if it were in this room. Do, do go on!"

"I have no gift for story-telling or description," he said to Captain Diamond. "My dear friend, you never heard me celebrated for that. My friend Diamond, I see you like to have your joke at me."

"Joke or no joke, I think our little Alice paid you a very handsome compliment. She herself describes very well I can tell you. What was that about the feet at Havver?" (So the honest gen-

tleman pronounced "fête.") "I declare to you, Tillotson, I never read any better in a regular book."

"I dare say," said he, indifferently. "I am sure of it. I can quite believe it. All ladies excel in that." But he showed no desire to hear a specimen of this gift.

Captain Diamond sighed, and moved uncomfortably in his chair. "And now," said he, changing the subject hastily, "tell us, in *all* your adventures did you ever meet any princess like those in the story-books—any one whom you lost your heart to? There, that will interest the ladies. Come, now, which of the French ladies was it? Ah, my boy, out with it! Come."

Mr. Tillotson shook his head. "Never," he said. "What French lady would trouble herself with me? I never fell in with an adventure of *that* sort, and never shall, I suppose."

"Nonsense," said the other seriously. "Is it a fine soldier-like fellow like you? I am sure you will, if you only look for them. And now, in St. Alans the other day? I declare, dear, I shouldn't be at all surprised. Do tell us about *that* young lady, Tillotson."

This was all accidental on the part of Captain Diamond. But Mr. Tillotson seemed to be uncomfortable. He was not well either. The young girl's eyes, stealing over, saw his confusion.

"Ah!" she said to herself, with a start, "*there* is his secret. Some one down there!" and her foot went down impatiently under the table.

Then, of a sudden, she became quite restless, and even bold. "Won't you describe this lady?" she asked him. "What was she like? Where did she live in St. Alans? Uncle, you told us that you were there once."

"Quite right, dear, so I was; was billeted there two nights, in the year——no matter. I and Knox were put over a saddler's. I assure you, my dears, there was as nice a saddler's daughter there as ever you could ask to see. I was a young fellow then, and not long joined, but I know, for a long time after, I was quite dismal about the saddler's daughter. Ah! I see you all laugh at me. Very well. There's my confession for you; and after that, I hope, my dear Tillotson——"

Mr. Tillotson had risen to go away, with the young girl's eyes still on him. He turned his face from her impatiently. "My dear friend," he said to the Captain, "a thousand thanks for your goodness. But I am a wretched guest, and don't know how to be agreeable."

With the younger girl he shook hands last, and coldly.

"He is not well, I suspect," said the Captain, evasively.

"Ah! do you know, nunkey, it struck me that there was something in that about St. Alans."

"No, no, uncle," cried the elder; "he is not thinking of such trifles. That I could see."

"I *wish* he was," said the Captain, wistfully; "from my soul I do. It would take his thoughts off. No, you are right, dear; and, do you know, I believe I oughtn't to have joked him about it."

"Why, uncle," said the younger girl, with her cheeks flaming, "do you suppose he is a girl or a child, that cannot bear a joke? Really, that is too good. I mean," she added, hastily, "for him, not about you, dear uncle. But it *is* rather absurd if a gentleman's feelings are to be held so sacred."

"Of course, dear," said the Captain gently. "And I think you are right. Egad! I had to rough it myself, and to bear plenty."

"Then why should he set up for this air of suffering? If we were all to do it, what a world it would be! And when there are so many in *real* distress—the poor and the unfortunate——"

"Oh, Alice!" said the elder Miss Diamond, in remonstrance.

"Well, we won't be too hard on poor Tillotson," said Uncle Tom; "and, besides, I truly think he was not well, the creature!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF A LOVE.

THAT visit to St. Alans was always before Mr. Tillotson. It had, indeed, coloured his life strangely, and no one could guess how much. The men who met him in business always knew that he was "a curious, mooning, stand-off man," and those who knew him still better, said, "The fact was, you know, he had got a blow some years before, a domestic business, which he had never got over." But none of them could divine the new trouble he had brought away with him. Down at that little, remote, dried-up, crusted, rusted little town, he had left behind him, as in an ancient, old-fashioned, but precious little shrine, his new-found hopes, something that lived and burned, something that had light and warmth, to which his heart was drawn back with an inexpressible yearning, as he now walked among the cold corridors of the world, and laid his fingers on what were to him merely cold statues. He had found new thoughts, new interests—something that seemed a complement to, and that would repair his own jagged and shattered, poor heart, something that seemed to whisper to him, "Live once more, enjoy light and the cheerful fires of life. You are young, and happiness may come back once more. The past is not so hopelessly gone!"

Strange to say, the more the distance increased, the picture he

had left behind increased in all the glow and intensity of colour and happiness. Between his eyes and the cold rows of figures and dry reports, now becoming more and more barren every hour, it stole in softly, and finally took the place of all else. From the board-room—from the Babel of discussion over discounts and exchange, with glib tongues and wits keen as razors, and sharp eyes all about him, he alone abstracted, was far away, looking back to that soft picture of the golden-haired girl floating so tranquilly from duty to duty. And when he came back to what was about him, he found himself as in a jail, with windows barred, the iron at his very heart. Some strange voice seemed to whisper to him that happiness was now finally gone from him for ever, the very last chance that was open to him, and that now he had best cast himself into the arms of despair.

This, after, all, was but a morbid tone of thought, wrought up daily more and more by constant harping and dwelling on the one theme. His health was poor at all times, and the habit of living alone worked on him still more.

"Why," he often said, in his lonely room, pacing up and down, as his habit was—"why could I not have been left as I was? I was content with my old stock of miseries; this dull preying on them and turning them over had become habitual. I was content with *that* wretchedness, and would have gone to my grave satisfied with my round of trouble. But now, to have this glimpse of paradise presented only to be snatched from me, which would have restored me to sensible, practical, peaceful life, made me useful, given me tranquillity—to have this hope taken from me! Surely it had been better to have been left as I was, with all my old misery!"

This was nearly his nightly meditation in his gaunt room in the bachelor's house as he paced up and down—a foolish, profitless parading that would end foolishly, as a friendly doctor warned him; not very profitable for his soul, either, as a friendly spiritual physician would have told him, from pulpit or confessional—a state of mind certainly to be pitied.

"My dear Tillotson," said Mr. Bowater to him, clearing away some specks from his own coat with the double glass, "I want to speak to you. You see, I remark you are not in good tone latterly. Now, really you should make a push for it. We all have our battle of life, and we all know that you have your peck of troubles." Mr. Bowater pronounced this phrase with great musical emphasis, as if it were part of that peck of malt which Willie had brewed. "A peck of troubles. I know——"

"Yes," said Mr. Tillotson, sadly; "but——"

"Ah! but yes, though," said Mr. Bowater. "I assure you there is but one remedy—work. Keep the mind going, my dear friend. When I missed the Medway Dock Estate, offered to me, I give you my honour and soul, for literally next to a song (you know what a

property it is now!)—I was going to stint myself—give up going out to dinners, and that sort of thing—when a friend recommended business—hard, earnest business. Well, I followed his advice, Sir, and here I am. Now here's a chance for you. Suppose you take home these reports, work through 'em, figures and all, abstract them, and tell us what you think of it? You'll find it hard enough for your teeth, my friend, but I'll swear you'll be—let me see—three-and-a-quarter per cent. better."

This was really kind advice; and, going home, Mr. Tillotson turned it over. He might try it, he thought, and so he plunged eagerly into the reports. It was a very hard nut indeed, as Mr. Bowater had said. He attacked it bravely, and sat up very many nights hard at work, until at last, after one long night, it *was* cracked. He came with it in this state to the office, very weary in mind and body, and not, as may be conceived, in the least benefited by Mr. Bowater's remedy.

It was a report on an Indian branch of the bank—the "Bhootan Foncier Extension Branch"—which required the aid of rupees and Indian exchanges, and referred to ryots, and such things.

"Why, bless me, Tillotson," said Mr. Bowater, when he saw him, "what have you been doing to yourself? You should take care, you know—not push the thing too far. Well—done it? Capital! For here is Mr. Mackenzie just fresh from Calcutta, and you can settle the whole thing with him. Go into that room, Tillotson, take the reports and Mackenzie with you, and not a soul shall disturb you till you are done. There."

Mr. Tillotson and the Eastern Mr. Mackenzie withdrew into the room. They both went into the routine of business, the former putting his hand very often to his forehead. Soon the table was spread out with paper, and books of papers, and great reports, and files and dockets, all bearing on the Eastern Bhootan Branch of the great bank. Mr. Tillotson, with an effort, however, went through it all mechanically, but still with great practical sense. For, as Mr. Bowater said, "Tillotson, when he *chose* to lay his mind to a thing, was about as good a man of business as you could light on at any desk between this and Temple Bar." As he turned over the papers listlessly, and listened to the ceaseless flow of Mr. Mackenzie's explanations, delivered with a strong Scotch burr, his eye fell upon a little sheaf of papers pinned together, and on one of which he saw the name of "Ross." He took it up eagerly, turned them over one by one. They were all bills, and a letter or two.

"Oh, that fellow," said Mr. Mackenzie, interrupting himself; "you are looking at his little account. He gave us trouble enough, he and his friend. A nice pair. I was up at the hills at the time, or we should never have 'touched' them."

There was interest in Mr. Tillotson's eyes.

"We were glad to compound with him on any terms, and, as it

was, he 'did us' shamefully. But I was up at the hills at the time. Mrs. Mackenzie, you know, was just then on the point of——no matter now. When I came back, however, I soon frightened the pair, and I think I would have saved every shilling for the bank without noise or trouble, only then came the Bhootan scrape, which disposed of all our chance."

"What scrape?" said Mr. Tillotson, eagerly.

"Oh, you heard it, of course," said the other, "though I believe it was kept out of the papers—I mean about torturing the Coolie. They were half drunk. He and his friend came home one night and found this Coolie fellow hadn't got something ready which they had ordered. The way they tortured this poor devil—sticking fuzees under his nails, burning his eyebrows, writing his name on his back with hot wood—it was the most barbarous thing you could fancy. The man died of it."

"And was there no punishment?" he asked.

"Oh, the thing was talked about, and an inquiry spoken of; but they managed to get the relatives out of the way. Then it *was* inquired into, and it was too late. A little money goes a great way in Bhootan. But I had it from my servant, who knew it all and, I believe, saw some of it. Ross, he said, was like a savage; his friend Grainger was trying to save the poor devil."

"Grainger?" said Mr. Tillotson. "To be sure. I have met him."

"Yes," said Mr. Mackenzie, "he's a great traveller. But that Ross, for a young man, is the most dangerous, ill-conditioned savage I ever met. I almost think the sun had something to do with it. It seems at times like drink on him; but, Sair," added Mr. Mackenzie, in his strong native accent, "it is the drunkenness of a bad hairt and evcel paissions."

"And did you know any more of him?" asked Mr. Tillotson, a little eagerly.

"Not I, so much as others," said Mr. Mackenzie, moving his papers restlessly, as if they were now losing time. "There were all sorts of stories, you know. There was that business of Mrs. Macgregor, which I know of myself, for poor Sandie told me himself when he was lying heart-broken on his bed just before he died. All that was vairy, vairy bad. A young and winsome creature ruined, ruined!"

"But these may be stories——"

"I can gie you chaipter and vairse," said Mr. Mackenzie, "at another time, Sir. It would shock your very ears to hear all I could tell you about that young man, and then his behaviour to the bank, Sir, beyond all——"

They went back to the Bhootan reports. But Mr. Tillotson was very abstracted and restless, and could hardly follow the details; so much so, that Mr. Bowater, later, was inclined to retract the

handsome commendation he was giving of Mr. Tillotson being a "first-class man of business." When the day was done, Mr. Tillotson said, anxiously, to the Indian manager, "Could you spare me an hour in the morning, and tell me more about what you have been saying, and with more particularity? All this concerns a person in whom I am interested, and who it is very right should know something of it."

"Indeed! then I can," said Mr. Mackenzie. "His pairsonal behaviour to the bank was simply outrageous, and ought never to be forgotten. I'll come, Sir, and give you chaipter and vairse."

Mr. Tillotson went home in a perfect ferment. Long he walked up and down his room that night, and turned over matters until his head was in a fever. It was surely a matter of duty with him to caution one he regarded with such ineffable interest. In the morning, Mr. Mackenzie came with details, and very fair proofs in his details, and left Mr. Tillotson quite satisfied. Then began his inward counsel, his walkings, and his tempestuous reasonings. The course that was opened to him was obvious. "But what," he thought, "will *she*—so generous, so noble, so magnanimous — think of such a secret denunciation of one who might stand in my way?" Still the absorbing feeling of all was love for *her*, and to this, before post hour came, he determined to sacrifice everything.

It was the first letter he had ever written to her. He wrote it ten times over, and then, at last, it was sent. Unknown to himself, it assumed a vein of exquisite and melancholy tenderness; in every line it betrayed the extraordinary passion that was nearly consuming him. He told, however, very plainly what he had heard. He himself might now speak, he said, without ambiguity or reticence, for reasons that she well knew. It might, indeed, appear to her that what he wrote was dictated by suspicious motives; but it was a sacred duty with him to speak. Then he sent it away. To that letter he never received an answer.

Day after day rolled by. Weary night followed weary day. He had looked for an answer absolutely "by return." She who was so tender and delicate would surely not let a superfluous hour go by without telling him what she thought. There went away a day and yet another day. He began to torture himself in a thousand ways to explain this; and, at last, after a week, arrived at *the certainty* that, shocked at what he had done, she could not trust herself to write freely, either in approval or condemnation, and forbore to notice his caution at all. Then the step he had taken showed itself with almost appalling deformity, as it were, in black shadows upon the wall; and it struck him almost from the first how ill any one would receive such a communication as to the past life of a future

husband, and he murmured to himself in despair, "Always a fool—always to be a fool!"

Another two days went by; and one night, passing his blank vigils, a letter was brought in to him—but not the one he waited for. It was from Ross, dated from Ireland, where his regiment was, and whence it was shortly to embark for Gibraltar. It was a strange mixture of rage and calmness, and seemed to reflect the character and moods of the man as he spoke. It began in a friendly way: "Dear Tillotson," and went on: "I have heard of what you have been at latterly, and write this to give you fair warning. Don't busy yourself with my concerns. I suppose you think because you have done a little twopenny-halfpenny service to me—and any gentleman, let me tell you, might be exposed to be taken in that way—you can go on any way you like. By Heavens! you shall not. I won't take it from you, or any other man. *You* set up to be a virtuous, pious, preaching fellow,—*you* do,—and I suppose you think it right to go sneaking about picking up stories, and writing them down to them. I wish you joy of your trade, my friend! I think you have found out it won't advance you much in *that* quarter. You are welcome to go and scrub and grub, and fish out what you can about me, and you won't fish much, I can tell you. I won't stand it longer, though—I tell you that. Do you think I forget the night you struck me in that mangy dirty town, and you came to me whining, and pretending you didn't know who it was? I'll be even with you, Tillotson, by G—d, and pay you back that cut before I die, mind me. And I suppose now, because you think I am shut up here in these infernal regions, that you can go on with your old sneaking tricks? Now, *don't* think it! (I suppose you saw we were ordered abroad to Gib?) And don't go on; for if I hear a ghost of a whisper that you are sneaking about and trading on my absence, I'll come back and give you a lesson that you'll rue to your death, or will *be* your death—I don't care which."

He had forgotten to sign his name; but it was easy for Mr. Tillotson to know who it came from. Yet on his mind all this string of incoherence made not the least impression; he was reading on, waiting, hoping to find something that concerned him more nearly. But he never found it, and here he was at the end, with the certainty that she had treated his caution with the contempt it deserved, that she disdained to reply to him, and that she thought his behaviour unworthy of an honourable man. "It is quite clear," he said, with a sort of relief; "it is all explained *now*." As for the mad letter he had just read, it as completely passed from his mind as if it were merely the symbols and letters in which the other greater blow must be conveyed. He never thought again of that Ross, who was only speaking according to his frantic nature.

Down at St. Alans, at the old rusted sanctuary of the Cathedral

Close, there were strange troubles gathering about the Tilney family. One thing was coming after another. The young golden-haired girl happened to be out on some usual mission when the post of that day came in. Mrs. Tilney alone was at home, in ill humour with the troubles the world was heaping on her, and saw this strange letter, in a hand which she seemed to know, and, above all, directed to Ada, who rarely received one. Not caring to be subject to any social restraints in reference to a person of such unimportant consideration, and thinking it was rather too much that she was to be "hoped up" with the pangs of curiosity in addition to her other trials, she presently opened it, and read Mr. Tillotson's secret letter. She was a little alarmed when she saw of what a confidential sort it was; but the alarm presently gave place to anger. Mr. Ross's prospects had brightened a good deal of late, and she hoped that some profit might be got for the family out of his ultimate success. She never relished Mr. Tillotson from the first. He had not paid her that implied homage, even to past charms, which she expected from every man, in some degree. She did not love Ada, and his preference for Ada, now revealed to her officially for the first time, to the prejudice of her own daughters, inflamed these feelings. "I'll have neither act nor part in it," she said to herself; "let her look out for herself." There was, besides, the difficulty of re-sealing; for withal she stood a little in awe of Ada, who would have calmly denounced such a proceeding; and, as the readiest course, destroyed it. But she went beyond this, for she wrote a little note to Ross, telling him to be on his guard, for "that fellow Tillotson was going about ferreting out stories about him in India, and writing them down to us here."

CHAPTER VII.

ILLNESS.

They did not see Mr. Tillotson at the Captain's house for a long time. Day after day went by, and they heard nothing. At last, Captain Diamond had put on the bishop's hat and the grey thread gloves, and limped away on what he called "his three legs," on a private expedition of his own. The private expedition was to the grand office of the Foncier Bank, in whose halls there was, as usual, a crowd—a crowd of angels with pens behind their ears, and fluttering wings of paper in their hands, who were flying to and fro, and bringing joyful or evil tidings to man. Captain Diamond stopped a

stout and apoplectic angel in a scarlet waistcoat to ask for his friend.

"Mr. Tillotson, Sir? Not here to-day. Not been here since a week—a little unwell. Like to see Mr. Newton?—if you step this way, Sir."

For one of the grand principles of the Foncier Company was to welcome everybody with warmth, and a part of their capital was set aside for insuring politeness and attention.

The Captain walked away in trouble. "I was sure of it," he said. "I saw it in his face that night. And I declare I ought not to have joked him, poor fellow."

And having called a cab, he drove off to the chambers where Mr. Tillotson lived.

They were not fashionable, but they were out of the way, and at this time of the year the rooms were not "very well let." It seemed a grand solitude. There were mahogany doors, and under a black hood in the hall a porter sat and took in messages. It had been Lord Mogador's in the old times.

"He has not been well at all," said this functionary. "You see, he's been overworking himself lately at the bank, Sir," he added, getting out of the hood and becoming intimate and confidential with the Captain, as every one was sure to do.

"Ah, now! Is that it?" said the Captain, with deep feeling, and reciprocating this confidence. "Do you know, I was afraid so. He dined with us not long ago, and I was afraid then. Now would you take him up this card?"

He found Mr. Tillotson up, with his hand to his head, sitting at his table. "This is very kind of you," said the latter. "I am trying to fight it off, you see, and I hope I shall. Those accounts and figures make my head swim, so I am trying what a little change will do."

"But, my dear friend," the Captain said, looking round despondingly. "*This* is not the way to fight it off. You don't call this a change. No, no. This is the way to bring it on. This is the way to be beaten."

"Well, and if I am," said Mr. Tillotson, "perhaps it would be all the better."

"But it isn't, it couldn't," said the Captain, eagerly. "You mustn't give in to this sort of thing. You must rouse, my friend. There was poor Tom Hammond, who went off just by giving way. Have you seen any body?"

"No, no," said Mr. Tillotson. "There is nothing to see any one about. They would only laugh at me. No, no, I shall be all right soon."

"Then see—come up to us," said the Captain, "and take a bit of dinner. Do now. Oblige old Tom—come. The girls will amuse you. And little Alice—who is a sweet child, and the life of us all,

was a little sore about it—between you and me and the post. You know women—the creatures!—they feel everything. God knows, they all suffer enough—from the Post itself—and do you know, Tillotson, I should always like to spare them when I could."

"Indeed, what you say covers me with confusion," said Mr. Tillotson; "but you believe me when I tell you I hardly knew what I was saying? And give my especial apologies to Miss Alice."

"Apologies, nonsense. But I'll tell them. Then you can't come? No, I suppose it would be better not. Very well. Now, now. You must take care of yourself. I wish to God you were out of this. It is very lonely, isn't it?"

"The landlord is not flourishing," said Mr. Tillotson. "I and another gentleman—a barrister, I believe—are his only tenants. It would be cruel to leave him, you know."

"Well, promise me to see some one. Let me send Gilpin to you."

Captain Diamond, however, had to leave without obtaining any satisfactory assurance. But he had a second interview in the hall with the tenant *of the hood*, who by this time seemed to have a sort of personal regard for him, and who laid his hand on the Captain's arm, as he impressed on him that "the poor gentleman neglected himself sadly, sadly, Sir!" And with him the Captain agreed, and, going away, made him promise to come straight to his house on any emergency. The Captain knew enough of human nature not to trust exclusively to this sudden intimacy or mere feeling for the porter's recollection of this promise.

He went home with this news, and told "the girls" at dinner. "Poor fellow! And he made his apologies to my little girl there in so gentlemanly a way. I saw he was ill, though I don't know exactly now what he did. I think he was absent or inattentive. Was that it, Alice?"

This was asked in perfect simplicity. But she fell into confusion as perfect.

"And I," she said, warmly, "was so sharp and pert to him. I know I was. Was I not, Anne?"

The elder girl, working, answered quickly, and without lifting her head, "I thought not. I never remarked it."

"But *he* remarked it, you see," she said, getting up, and going over to the fire. "*He* saw it. Up stairs I could have cut my tongue out. And he was ill all the time."

"Poor fellow! yes," went on the Captain; "and if you only saw the lonely place he is in! Quite dreadful! I know I'd sooner be sent off to an hospital! Better to have company about one, any day. I declare I got quite a shiver when I saw him in that lonely place, without a soul to look after him."

The younger girl stopped in her walk, and looking at her uncle

with wistful, half tearful eyes, said, "Oh, uncle! how dreadful! Ah! don't you pity him?"

The Captain looked at her back again. "Give me the hand," he said (one of his pet phrases). "Give me the hand, dear. You are a good girl."

At that moment the maid of the house came to the door, and said a man was below wanting to see the Captain.

"Who can he be?" said he. "What *can* he want?"

And he lifted himself, as usual, by a sort of leverage, by the aid of table and chair. These little motions and gestures were all part of the man, and necessary to the idea of him, in those who loved him.

"Don't you know?" the young girl said, heartily. "Don't you see? It is about Mr. Tillotson. He is ill; he is worse."

"God bless me!" said Captain Diamond, bewildered at this marvellous instinct.

"Tell him to come up here, Mary," she said, decisively.

The porter came up. "I thought it right to come to you, Sir," he said, "as you told me" (this "telling" was scarcely the sole reason); "but he's very bad to-night. Had to take to bed about an hour after you left. And, between you and me, Sir, I think it's something like fever."

"And did you send for no doctor?" the young girl said, excitedly.

"He wouldn't hear of that, Miss. He bound me up solemnly. He said he'd leave the house if——"

"And did you mind him?" she said, almost scornfully, and turning away from him. "I suppose you would let him die to obey his instructions."

The porter was sent away presently, gratified with a glass of wine "after his walk."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you, Sir," the Captain added, with great courtesy. "It was very kind and considerate of you." For he seemed to forget that there was another inducement in the case besides kindness and consideration.

"Now, uncle," said she, "what is to be done?"

"Give me the hand," said the Captain. "Quite right. What *is* to be done? We must bring the poor fellow a doctor. That is the first thing. See. I'll go for Gilpin myself."

And he got up and went to his room, whence he came limping with the grey gloves and bishop's hat. On the landing a figure met him, and said, softly and confidentially, "Nunkey, may I go with you in the cab, merely just for company?"

"Who's this?" said the Captain. "Ah, Alice. To be sure, and glad to have you with me. But won't you be afraid? It's a rough night."

"Thanks, my dear nunkey. I'll fetch my bonnet in a second."

She was not indeed fifty seconds "getting on" her bonnet, and took her uncle's arm down stairs.

"Good Alice," he said, in the cab. "Give me the hand. You are a girl of spirit; and I don't wonder at your liking poor Tillotson. God knows I feel for him."

They went for Dr. Gilpin first, but found that he was out. He was to be in in about half-an-hour for the night, and the Captain left a message for him. Then they went off to Duke's Chambers.

"I can't leave you in that cold cab, dear," said the Captain, limping down the step. "And I should be afraid," he added, doubtfully.

"I am not afraid," she said, springing out. "There is no infection, dear uncle. I can wait below."

"Ah, yes," he said. "That's just it."

And in the porter's room, where, however, there was a light but no fire, she stayed while her uncle went up.

He found his friend in bed inside another room, tossing miserably. It was indeed a fever. His eyes were fiery, and he hardly knew the Captain.

"He's worse by far than when I left him," said the porter.

The Captain had some knowledge of elementary physic, and some old-fashioned remedies as drinks and such like, and was presently limping round the room, trying to look up anything that would be useful for his composition. He did not find much. "Egad, I wish Gilpin would come. His head isn't high enough, poor fellow," he said, with deep compassion. "We might get a cushion out of the next room."

In the next room, which was half dark, a figure stole up to him. "God bless me," said Uncle Tom, "what's this?"

"Oh, uncle, it was so cold and lonely below. And how is he? Is it so bad?"

"Well, he's not well, and I don't like it, dear, you know. And you feel for him, I'm sure you do. If I could find a cushion, now——"

She was looking for one in a moment, and found one. "I am sure," she said, wistfully, "I could be useful in some way. Is there nothing I could do?"

"I'm sure you could," said the Captain. "Ah, there's Gilpin. I knew he'd come."

Gilpin, the friendly doctor, went in, drew aside the curtains, held the light close to that pale face, did the customary "feeling," and touching, and pressing, satisfied himself, and then came into the middle of the room. The Captain and the old porter waited eagerly and anxiously to hear his report.

"Why, this is fever—nervous fever," he said; "and he must have had it on him this week past. How did you let him go so far?"

"We could do nothing with him," said the porter. "He never looks after himself. I saw it coming on him; but you might as well talk to the wind as to him."

"Nervous fever," said the Captain, anxiously. "That's a bad sort of thing—eh, doctor? What do you say?"

"Can't say anything now, Captain," said the doctor, writing. "I should have seen him before now. But we must only try and patch up as well as we can." He finished the prescription. "You must get a nurse," he said, "of course. This is a very ticklish matter, Diamond, I tell you plainly. Is that a nurse in the next room?"

"No, no. God bless me!"—inventing, with extraordinary readiness, a legend to cover his niece's situation—"it's only a little maid of ours, whom, as we were going the same way, you know, I thought I might drop at a shop." For the Captain, though he would have scorned a falsehood for any ends of his own, was always ready in the cause of affection and chivalry with the most fertile invention.

"Now, see, my friend," said Gilpin, holding out the wet prescription. "Get this made up, get the nurse, and with this he may do very well for the next couple of days. The fact is, I must go down to the south to-morrow, and can't get back for some time."

"My goodness!" said the Captain, aghast, as if his departure withdrew all medical aid from the world; "sure you won't throw us over, Gilpin?"

"I'll tell you," said the doctor, rising. "If he should get suddenly bad—but I don't think he will—send to Dennison, Sir Duncan Dennison, the Queen's physician. There is only one man in London knows nervous fevers, and that's Dennison. It's miraculous! If you can't get Dennison—and it's very likely you won't—why you must try Stony, or some of the rest."

The doctor was going. "My dear Gilpin," said the Captain, busy with the purse, "how kind of you—how good of you!"

"Nonsense! my friend," said the doctor, putting back the purse. "What are you at? All in good time."

A muffled little figure went hurriedly to the window as they passed through the next room—the figure of the little maid, whom the Captain was bringing to a shop. He looked sharply at her, and went away.

That, indeed, proved the beginning of a terrible nervous fever which seized on Mr. Tillotson. For hours he was tossing and writhing in its grasp. With difficulty Captain Diamond brought away his niece, and quietly put her in the cab, with all sorts of assurances. The declarations he put into the doctor's mouth—with a most delicate end—would have astounded that practitioner. "On my oath, my dearest little girl, he said so. Be up and down at his work the day after to-morrow, or the next day after that at furthest

On my oath, yes!" But this romance was all superfluous, for the supposed maid had been at the door, and heard the true verdict.

Yet, for the case of a person who was to recover and be at his work on the day after to-morrow; the Captain was singularly nervous and anxious. When they came down to breakfast, they found that he was already gone, having left word that he would be back "soon." He did not return until nearly four; the little girl had an anxious, restless time, running to the window.

The elder Miss Diamond, in the drawing-room, talked very confidently to comfort her. "He is strong," she said, "and is sure to get over it. Men always get over these things."

"I hope he will," said the other, devoutly, still looking out of the window, "*for the dear Captain's* sake."

"Yes," said the elder girl, gravely, "Uncle Diamond would grieve dreadfully."

But, in the bed-room, the grim Martha Malcolm had a different sort of comfort. "What a pother!" she said; "he's neither kith nor kin to any of us, and must bear his trials like any other man. The whole house turned upside down, the Captain gone without his breakfast, all for a counting-house fellow, that has money enough to buy friends ready made. What work it is!"

"Ah, but, Martha, think of the poor creature lying there, without a soul to go near him! If you knew his story, how he has suffered——"

"And why didn't he make friends of his Mammon? Ah, I see it's wasting time talking to *you*, Miss Alice. It's ill talking to those as won't care to listen, and for good reasons of their own."

The colour rose to the cheeks of the little pale girl, but she said nothing. She heard the voice of the Captain below, and ran down. There was a change in his face to the greatest cheerfulness and heartiness.

"We're getting along," he said, "rallying like a house afire. Oh, he'll be as well as a roach; let me see," the Captain said, fixing on a date carefully—"by next Friday." Then his face (as if a spring had relaxed) suddenly fell into a very mournful expression, quite inconsistent with such good news.

"Ah, you are only telling me this, uncle," she said, impatiently. "I *know* he is bad."

"On my oath," the Captain was beginning.

"Yes, I know he is ill," she went on, excitedly; "and what is the use of trying to deceive me? *I know* that he is very bad indeed."

"Well," said Uncle Diamond, "perhaps he is not so well as he was; but he'll do wonderfully yet. Why, God bless me! I have known men stretched there on the broad of their backs for weeks, and not a bit the worse—not a bit." Then the Captain's voice fell

into a feeling key, and with a look of deep compassion he said, "My poor little girl, we must take these things as they are sent. My heart bleeds for that poor Tillotson, it does indeed. But we *must* pull him through."

But the next day, after the Captain came back, all his powers of deception and cheerful little mendacities could not disguise the truth. It was a raw, piercing day, and the Captain, in a very thin great-coat, limped along steadily to wait on his friend. He said he would be back at four, "with tip-top news." But that hour had long passed, and he did not return. There was an anxious face at the window looking out watching the gusts, and the east wind piercing the walkers through and through. At that moment, when they were just thinking of dinner, the Captain drove up in a cab, which he kept waiting at the door. He came in to them with a curious, wistful look.

"Gilpin's not come back," he said; "very odd, ain't it?"

"You know he wasn't to be back," said the elder Miss Diamond.

"No, to be sure," said he, with alacrity. "What an old Tom-the-Goose I am! Always the way with me. I should forget this lame leg of mine if it wasn't fastened to me."

"And how is he to-night, nunkey?" said the young girl.

"Not so well," said he dismally; "not *quite* so well, I mean, as we could all wish, you know. Between you and me and the post, I wish Gilpin *was* back."

"I knew it would be this way," the young girl cried, impulsively. "Of course he is not back, and won't be back. What *is* to become of him?"

"Here is dinner, Sir," said Martha Malcolm, suddenly appearing at the door, "cooling and half spoiled, while other people are running about the town. Take my advice, Captain, and leave him to the regular doctors. Let him pay them, and they'll get him through."

"At any rate, uncle, you must eat your dinner now."

"Dinner!" said Uncle Diamond. "Lord bless you! I've dined two hours ago. Had a chop at the Son and Heir—as good a couple of chops as were ever cut off a loin. By the way, dear, you don't remember the name of that surgeon to a palace, the fellow that waits on the royal family when they're sick, do you? Mere curiosity, you know."

"Ah," said the girl, starting, "then you want him? So he is bad, very bad?"

"No, no. On my oath, no. I wasn't thinking of it. It was only to ease my own mind. Egad, I had forgot. There's the wig to be dressed,—old Tom's,—and I'll look in on our patient as I come round."

They told him the name, accepting his little fictions. The

Captain, when he was out of carshot, bade the man drive "as hard as he could go" to the square where Sir Duncan Dennison, Bart., physician in ordinary to the Queen, resided. It was now a little after seven, and a servant, evidently in his evening suit, threw open the door. The Captain, not in the least awed, put his card into the menial's hand, and bade him take it in to his master. There was a half-crown under the card. "And see, my man, I'll be obliged to you to get this done at once. Case of life and death, you know. And, see, don't mind about getting out his own horses. I'll bring him off myself."

The servant smiled at this pardonable ignorance, but told him very respectfully, letting the half-crown into a rich plush treasury, that he was very sorry about it, but it couldn't be done or even thought of. "Fact is," he said confidentially, "Sir Duncan has a dinner to some of the 'Ousehold, and he's a dressin', Sir, at this moment. And you see, Sir, in fact, I run up in a 'urry, taking you to be one of the company."

The Captain's face fell. Still he was of that school who believe that money, like Hannibal's hot vinegar, will move even rocks, and he felt in his pocket for another half-crown.

The servant saw the motion, and was so really taken by this simple liberal gentleman, that he said with sympathy, "It ain't no use, I tell you plainly, Sir. Sir Duncan's got dinner-company coming, and wouldn't stir 'ccpt for her Majesty. I dusn't do it, Sir. Very sorry indeed. Beg pardon, Sir; but there's fust carriage."

"Fust" carriage was indeed now clattering up and plunging to the door, and Captain Diamond, seeing that it was hopeless, limped hopelessly aside out of the blaze of such glories.

He was in deep trouble, and hardly knew what to do. The words of Gilpin seemed to ring in his ears like a bell, that there was no man the equal of Dennison for the treatment of nervous fever. There were surely other men as good, except only for that positive declaration of Gilpin's, and the Captain had a reverence, next to what he had had for the commander-in-chief, for the oracular opinions of medical men. He was in a dreadful puzzle and trouble, for both apothecary and nurse had jointly and severally declared that the patient was every moment getting worse.

He came back to the house about nine. The young girl who had complained of headache, had been got to go to bed, under an offer, voluntarily made by the elder Miss Diamond, that she would come and repeat such news as might come in.

The Captain came in with his troubles written on his face. He looked round cautiously, to see was "his .ittle girl" present.

"My heart is broken," he said. "My dear, I don't know what to do. What would you say? Wait for Gilpin—he may be back to-night—or get in another fellow? Ah if we could only get hold

of that Dennison. Wonderfully tip-top man, I'm told. Can do anything with a touch. It's very unfortunate."

"My dear uncle, I should say get in some less skilful doctor, who will do well enough."

"But then we can have Dennison to-morrow morning, the first thing; and this fellow may turn out a botch, and spoil the work for him. And the poor fellow may be getting worse every moment. She's abed, is she? Glad of it, poor little soul. What are we to do?"

Neither uncle nor niece could hear the light steps nor see the little slight figure wrapped in a giant's cloak which was at the door.

"Damn that pampered Queen's doctor!" said Uncle Diamond, with sudden rage and imprecation. "What business has he to be filling himself with meat and drink, and giving his dinners, when there are Queen's subjects dying in the country, and a touch from him would put a poor fellow on his legs?"

"Suppose, dear uncle, we sent back to Dr. Gilpin again. He might have come back."

"Very sensible, my dear," said the Captain rising to get his shovel-hat. "Ah, see there now! Woman's sense! Give me the hand. The very thing."

"But you must not go yourself," said she. "You are wearing yourself out."

"I like it," said he. "I like this junketing about in cabs; I do indeed." And away he went once more to Dr. Gilpin's.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN EXPEDITION.

Not long after, Miss Diamond went up to the younger girl's room and found the door fastened; so she was fast asleep, no doubt. Though she could hardly have slept in the jingling, clattering cab which was carrying her away to the square where the great doctor resided who was Queen's physician, though he had only a small fraction of the royal practice, it being shared among some six other of his brethren. A cold night, with cold air coming in through the crevices of the ill-closing doors and windows, and the fairy figure inside shivered sometimes a good deal; still she was warm in heart and excited; and that small face, as the cab turned a corner sharply, was flashed on by the street lamps, and showed

an anxious and eager air, until at last it drew up at a yellow house, where it seemed as though a funeral was about being "performed," and one of the doctor's own victims was about being carried out.

Heavy coaches, with solemn horses, and drivers buried in capes, seemed to be bivouacking in the street; only they appeared to be mourning-coaches with lights, and it was to be an illuminated funeral. Solemn footmen, who seemed yet larger in stature from the darkness, hung about the steps. These gentlemen set down the little lady, who tripped courageously from the cab and went up the steps, as the young lady who was to superintend the "Hice." It was the same "gentleman" who had opened the door to the Captain that opened the door now to her. He had a large experience of human nature; drawn from the human nature that came between two and four—the doctor's hours; and saw at a glance that she was a good deal above "Hice." When she told him what she wanted, he shook his head,—almost laughed. Then the soft influence of the Captain's half-crown, still down in the plush-regions, seemed to bring back quiet and subdued tones. "Really it can't be done, Miss. Sir Duncan 'ud pack me off in the morning. There's great company, there, from the 'Ousehold," he added with mystery. "Better come in the morning, Miss; first thing."

But she was now well in the hall. She had found a new courage that made her do things that surprised herself, from the force of her absorbing passion. At this moment came a burst, and a roar of confused and hilarious voices rushing out. The "gentlemen" were going up; and the alarmed servant almost pushed her aside out of sight, and then hurried away himself.

The noisy procession trailed up in a kind of affectionate order, for two, and sometimes three, seemed interlaced together in a "winey" way, and a tall thin gentleman, with a flat back to his head, and a high collar to blue coat and gilt buttons, broke from one of these combinations, and, to Alice's alarm, came down again towards the front parlour to fetch something out of his coat. She was shrinking behind the door, and a claret aroma foretold that he was coming. She could hardly get out of the way without showing herself to the others, and in great affright, knew not what to do, when the tall gentleman started back with a loud "God bless my soul!"

He looked amiable and good-natured, and, with a confidence almost childish, she ran to him and said: "Oh, Sir! you can help us here. He is dying—ill——"

"God bless me again! Dying! who?"

Sir Duncan was an elderly man and an old beau, and was not at all displeased at the imputation of the visit from the "pretty girl." She threw back a little hood she wore, told her story eagerly, and came up very satisfactorily to the description Mr Tilney had given of her.

"What do you want now, my dear?" said the Queen's physician. "You see I have got friends here."

"Oh, Sir, I know that, and I don't know what you will think of me. But *he* is ill—is dying, perhaps."

"Well, my dear, there are a good many dying about us here; but if we were to take to leaving our dinners for them, we'd be soon dying ourselves, my dear. And who's *he?*"

He was all moist with good humour, this Queen's physician, under the influence of the famous "bin."

"Ah, Sir, if you would be so kind, just for a moment, as Uncle Diamond says—a mere touch of your little finger would do—a dreadful nervous fever——"

Through all the claret this favourite subject, and the implied compliment to his reputation, came. Nervous fever was his weak point. Wonderfully accomplished as he was in that department, he yet needed a few little touches.

"Is it far from here?" he asked, getting his hat.

"Then you'll come?" said she, joyfully. "Oh, how kind—how good of you! He is saved!"

He looked at her a moment through the pink clarety film. A comic twinkle came into the moist eyes. "Ah! I see," he said, and began to repeat, "The little part, That's called the heart—Nice doings, egad!"

She coloured up. "No, no—indeed, Sir, it is not that."

"Not what?" he asked with pretended astonishment. "Ah, little rogue! Come along. Cab here. All right. John, whisper Mr. Tilney that I'll be back in twenty minutes."

Captain Diamond, travelling about in his cab seeking his friend Gilpin, had come back unsuccessful to his friend's rooms. He was met at the door by the porter, with great disquiet in his face. "The poor gentleman is getting worse, Sir. I was going off to you, Sir; for the apothecary says he seems to be in a sinking state like, and we must get in a doctor at once."

"Run then, like a good lad," said the Captain; "or take my cab."

The porter got his hat, opened the swinging door, and at that instant held it back, for another cab had driven up rapidly, and a gentleman with a white tie, and dressed for a party, had jumped out; had also helped out a little lady. The Captain looked wistfully.

"Hope they're going to have no fiddling or that sort of thing to-night. Poor Tillotson——"

The florid gentleman, dressed for the party, had come up to him. "I want to see Mr. Tillotson. Does he——"

"Oh, uncle!" said the little girl, running to him.

"Why, God—bless—my—soul!" said the Captain, in the blankest astonishment.

"Uncle, uncle," she went on, "this is Sir Duncan Dennison, and he is come from his dinner-party. Oh, *so* kindly! And, uncle, he has promised to make him well again."

"If it's a nervous fever—that is," said he gravely. "Come, I hope there's no mistake."

"The Queen's physician, eh?" said the Captain, half stupified, and peering close into his face, as if *that* would have satisfied him of his identity.

"Ah! Come, come my old friend," said the other impatiently (he felt the east wind at that moment through his cambric shirt, and began to think he had done a ridiculous thing), "I can't waste time here. Show me this fever."

He was taken up and brought in to the patient. He studied the poor wasted, tossing figure before him critically. He put his head on one side, looked round at a crevice over the door with extraordinary vacancy of expression; then, with the same curious vacancy, smoothed some creases out of his dress-trousers.

The Captain, peering well forward, and supported on the shorter of his two limbs, gazed at each of these proceedings as if they were to be part of the cure. "Well, doctor," he said nervously, when they had been all a reasonable time in silence—"well, doctor?"

But he was motioned into silence. Finally, Sir Duncan looked at his watch. "Lord bless me, how late it is! I must go now."

"But well, doctor," said the Captain, still peering, "what d'ye say?"

"Give me a pen, some one," said Sir Duncan, "and don't speak while I am writing. I am going to order strong poisons, and a few grains, you know, make all the difference."

The Captain was secretly aghast at this declaration, the bearing of which he could not understand; but he assumed—as, indeed, this amiable old warrior always did—that the fault was with his own dull faculties, and, smiling on Sir Duncan in cordial approval of his alarming practice, limped over to the bed.

"Get that done," cried Sir Duncan, "at once. Good-night, little lady. You brought me out in an awful night. No matter; you were right, and I wouldn't have missed it for a fifty-pound note. It's the true stuff."

"Oh, Sir, but will he recover?"

"We'll see in the morning. I'll bring Slader with me from the hospital. Like to see what he can say to this. It'll be a slap in the face to him. It's positively beautiful; and, my dear child, you didn't deceive me—this is the true thing. Good-night."

He was gone. Perfectly bewildered, the Captain stood looking after him.

"What did he say, my dear, about being beautiful? I'm a little hard o' hearing."

"I don't know, nunkey," she said, somewhat troubled; "I couldn't make him out; but he's to be here the first thing in the morning."

"Ah, yes, yes, the creature!" said the Captain; "and, egad, my dear, did you remark he seemed greatly pleased?"

"Oh, yes, nunkey," she said with pleasure, "so he was; but," she added, falling into despondency again, "it was more with me, I'm afraid, nunkey. But didn't he tell you, when you were with him in the room?"

"Ah, to be sure," said the Captain, with great boldness and readiness; "so he did. He said he was in a fine way to recover, and would be on his legs and driving out in a job-carriage on Sunday next."

"Ah! Did he say that?" she said joyfully.

"On my oath he did," the Captain said earnestly—"honour bright! And now, little woman, we may go home. He is in good hands here, I know, with Mrs. Pidger. I hope they keep you comfortable here, Mrs. Pidger; and if there's anything you like, I hope you'll say so." The Captain's fingers had drawn out the little steel bag purse.

Going home in the cab (it was getting on to twelve,) the Captain said: "You must be tired, pet. Ye did a wonderful deal for that poor fellow; and a poor old botch like me, I couldn't have managed it—no, indeed. Let Tom alone for never helping a soul. Mine's the will, but not the way—eh, pet?"

"Nonsense, uncle," she said, putting her face forward to kiss him.

"Ah, you little cosherer!" said the Captain. "You have eyes, though, and can see. Are you cold? Muffle yourself up. Get on, Sir," said the Captain, with assumed fierceness. "You're not going the regulation pace. D'ye hear me? And I tell you what," the Captain added, putting the shovel-hat out of the window, "your cab's not in a fit state, Sir: there's a hole in the door here." Then his voice fell again into the old soft key so natural to him. "Ah, you like him, pet? I see it with half an eye; and upon my conscience, I like you for it—I do, for he's as fine a man as ever stepped, and I don't wonder you love him, my dear."

"Oh, uncle!" she said.

"Nonsense!" he went on. "Surely you don't mind me no more than a priest—God forgive me. I was going to say an old woman, but Tom's not come to that yet; and I can tell you Tillotson has his eyes open, such as he is, and knows when a pretty girl likes him—ay, indeed."

"Oh, uncle, what do you mean?" she half faltered. Had there been light, he would have seen her blushing.

"There, you shiver again, my dear. Confound this cab-fellow! I'll summons him in the morning. *I* could tell you something I

heard the other night when the poor fellow was lying tossing and saying little scraps of talk to himself. He opened his eyes and fixed them on me, just as you might; then he gave a moan that went to my heart—so it did. 'What ails you, my poor fellow?' I said. 'All is lost,' he replied. 'It was a foolish dream, and she never can be mine! She does not care for me, and never did. All is lost!' I remember those words, and got them by heart in my bed. 'All is lost!' says he; and though I knew *he* couldn't know what I was talking of, I couldn't help telling him to cheer up, for she *did* love him; and that Tom knew, and knows it now."

"Oh, uncle," the young girl repeated again, "what *can* you mean?"

"I mean that's what the poor fellow has got ill on. He has had a struggle, and it's worried him into this fit."

"Ah, nunkey, how can you know it is about me? He has met plenty of others."

This view staggered the Captain for a moment; but he recovered himself. "Didn't I hear him mention your nice little name, though—eh?"

"My name? No, no."

"On my oath, yes," said the Captain. "I give you my word of honour—not a word o' lie in it. Oh, I wouldn't say it!" Alas, this was another of the Captain's venial untruths. "'Yes,' says he, as plain as I am speaking now, 'Oh, how I love her, and she must be mine.'" Mr. Tillotson had never used this form of ejaculation; but a passage from one of the old novels drifted across the Captain's brain, and seemed to him highly appropriate, and even elegant.

Had Mr. Tillotson indeed made some such disordered allusion, but was it to another name and to another lady?

When they arrived home it was midnight. The gloomy Martha Malcolm, grim and terrible, met them at the door. "This is nice gadding about," she said; "an' you're fit for goin' out at night!"

"Once and away, Mrs. Malcolm, you know," said the Captain, in high good humour.

"I have no fault with you, Captain; but she will be neither said nor led. You ought to be ashamed, Miss. You're getting old enough now to have sense."

"Ah, then, she *has* sense, I can tell you, Martha. More than the full of our two old heads; that is, I mean," he added, a little confused, "of *this* old head—Tom's, you know, my dear. Why, Mrs. Malcolm, you could be my daughter, let alone my niece. But she knows what she's about, Mrs. Malcolm, and had a little business to-night."

"Hush, uncle," said the girl, rushing up stairs. Mrs. Malcolm came grumbling on behind.

"Business, indeed! Going after a whining, sickly, puling creetur,

He's not half a man; his head all the time drivellin' over another girl."

"No, oh no," said the Captain, alarmed at this allusion; "you are a little out there."

"Maybe I am," said the other coldly, "but I know better all the time. But surely, Cap'en, you should have the sense not to be dragging a thing of that sort, with a chest no thicker than my muslin cap, about the town at this hour of the night. Do you feel that wind? Listen! I shouldn't wonder if it was her death."

CHAPTER IX.

A PROPOSAL.

In course of time Mr. Tillotson became "convalescent," and was seen, very pale and a little weak, at the bank. Mr. Bowater was delighted to see him.

"An excellent colleague," he always said; "always go in the shafts till he dropped. In fact, we'd given him the Great Bhootan Report to work through, and he went to it with too much *love*, you know. Ah! very glad to see you, Tillotson. I assure you no one has been allowed to touch the papers since. I gave special orders. Fetch down the Bhootan papers for Mr. Tillotson. Mackenzie has been here every day since. There's a fire in the room, too."

Mr. Mackenzie was in attendance. With a sort of sigh, and yet with a certain alacrity, Mr. Tillotson went to the work at once.

In truth, while he lay on his bed, getting better, he had reflected a good deal. He was naturally a religious man, and had been reading what are called "good books"—at least one, which is really the best of all good books—the *De Imitatione*—not the maimed, garbled version which has on many occasions been "prepared" for English readers, just as wines are prepared for English drinkers, but the old, ripe, unadulterated Latin. As he read, perhaps the human passion—so absorbing as to wreck a whole life and nearly bring him into the Temple of Death—seemed to take less proportions. Perhaps there was a little shame, too, at the slight on the mystery of his old great sorrow. But as he read, and as he grew better, it seemed as if what he had passed through was not at all so near, and was a thing he could look back to far more calmly. And therefore he entered into business with Mr. Mackenzie with some zest.

"As we finished with him," said that gentleman, "so we begin with Mr. Ross. His friend was here only a week ago, and I must say they have all behaved in a very gentlemanly way——"

"Gentlemanly! After those inhuman barbarities——"

"Rumours, my dear Sir. Well, after all, still, we must not believe *everything* we hear, especially in those places. The lower Indians are notorious for their want of truth. His friend Grainger has discharged all his obligations to the bank in the fullest way."

"But you told me with such confidence——"

Mr. Mackenzie started. "Pray forgive me, Sir, but I hope you haven't been quoting me. It would injure me a great deal. Wild oats must be sown somewhere, and, as his friend says, he may be soon married to a very desirable pairson," added Mr. Mackenzie, falling into his Scotch accent. I cannot vooch for all the idle stories that float through a settlement."

"Going to be married," repeated Mr. Tillotson, mechanically. "Ah, at last! And when?"

"I think he said immediately, but I cannot be sartain. A very beautiful creatur, too."

Here, Thomas à Kempis came back strongly upon Mr. Tillotson's mind with a little commentary, "Weary nights, weeks and months, and nervous fever—all for this!"

"Well, you've pulled through, Heaven be praised," said Captain Diamond, sitting with Mr. Tillotson one afternoon. "It was a narrow escape, believe me. But now, Tillotson, see here. I want to speak to you seriously. Tom's going to put on his wise nightcap. I dare say you are laughing at me——"

"I wish I had half your sense, my dear friend," said the other warmly, "as I wish that I had even a quarter of your kind heart."

"Pish! ah, go along! My poor fellow," said the Captain, nervously passing by this compliment, "you went through a great deal—indeed you did, Tillotson: and now you won't mind my speaking to you seriously, will you?"

"My dear friend," said Mr. Tillotson, "surely——"

"Very well, then. Sir Duncan, you know, the doctor—who is about as wide-awake a fellow as ever stepped—he says it *can't* go on. It will be all back again to-morrow or next day. And if you are caught by the leg the next time, my dear fellow,—I tell you this plainly,—not all the doctors in town will pull you through."

"I have been very foolish," said Mr. Tillotson, "and mean to take more care of myself. After all, I begin to think it a selfish thing to be mooning away life in this way. I am going to begin. Indeed yes."

"Give me the hand," said Captain Diamond eagerly. "I like to hear you say that. You're a good fellow." And he paused in some embarrassment. "Now, another thing. This isn't the place for you. Capital rooms, you know, but——"

"Well, I *am* thinking of changing," said Mr. Tillotson, smiling.

"It's not *that* so much," said the Captain in growing embarrass

ment. "It's the life. You ought to look about you, Tillotson. Why, you are only a boy, you know. Bless me! if I were your age, I'd go and pick out the prettiest girl and set up at once. I'd have done it years ago, only, my dear fellow," added the Captain, with a comic look, "they didn't like the cut of my Roman nose, you see."

Mr. Tillotson shook his head. "That sort of thing is all past for me, long, long ago. I fear the same objection would apply—not, indeed, to the nose,—for I have a very small one,—but to my life and disposition."

"My dear friend," said the Captain enthusiastically, "is that all? Then I know a little girl that at this moment is worshipping the very key of your watch; that you have only to speak, for her to say 'Yes' with a heart and a half. You know who I mean, Tillotson; a little girl that's a treasure, and who at this moment knows no more of what I am talking about than a child unborn. Honour bright. She'd drop down and die at this moment if she did. Surely I am next door to an old woman, Tillotson. You know it was all head or tails with your life then. Upon my soul, it quite touched me to see her little affection—the creature! I thought her heart would be broken, I did indeed: but never a word. I picked it out, you know; and, as I stand here, and am a living Christian holding the king's commission, you owe your life to her—you do indeed! But for that faithful little soul, Tillotson, you'd be lying now nailed down fast in your coffin—Heaven be between you and harm, though!"

Wondering, amazed, Mr. Tillotson listened to the story, which the Captain then told him, of her little exploit—related with many a "not a word of lie in what I am telling you, Tillotson. But I could talk to you for hours on this. And, you know, she's so delicate. A chest—really, now—on my solemn word of honour—no more than that bit of blotting-paper. Dennison, the Queen's own fellow,—tip-top, you know, and attending all the great lords,—has taken to her like his own child. See, Tillotson," added the Captain wistfully, just as another man would come to the bank, begging to get his bill "done," "try—just try and think of all this."

In this way the Captain had carried out his little plan, although he had professed so humbly that Tom was "no better than an old woman,—with him a formal or contemptuous phrase,—for his private opinion of that amiable and most sensible class of God's creatures who have travelled nearly to the end of the highway, and have brought with them a growing load of patience, good-humour, and observation, was not so contemptuous as that vulgar one of the world. He came home in great spirits, and left his friend in deep thought, who did not so much recoil from it as he would have done before, but looked at it calmly, and even weighed it. In the weighing, too, the news that had reached him of the coming marriage did its part. "Why should I," he said to himself bitterly, "go on and

be guilty of the folly of making myself an eternal monument of self-sacrifice, when it is not in fashion any where else? It is making myself absurd, and will only amuse others. It is time that I should begin to live." Then he thought with pleasure of the picture, mechanically but skilfully coloured by the Captain's fingers. And he felt a sympathy and kindness to the girl who had been so true and "natural" in her devotion. "After all, the world has some people who care for me," he thought. Then he went back to that coming marriage. "God help her!" he said. "But she is sensible, and knows her own course." This reasoning and train of thought was spread over many days. He thought he must take the first opportunity of thanking his preserver.

The first opportunity was two days later. They were in their modest room, working, as the pale, ill-looking figure entered. The girl, whom rest had a little restored after her labours, felt herself glowing with almost a "lake" colour as this visitor entered. Mr. Tillotson had come back to his old easy and almost indifferent manner. "This is the first visit I have paid," he said, "and it certainly *should* be the first. What its poor value may be——"

"We are so glad to see you restored," the elder one said. The younger was still glowing and flaming. "Uncle and we all were so anxious."

"I meet nothing but goodness," said Mr. Tillotson earnestly and sincerely, "and I am sure I don't know why. I have led a cold unproductive life; useful to no one, interesting to no one, profitable to no one, and therefore, why any one should care whether I lived or died, is a mystery to me."

They said nothing. A milliner or work-woman came at this moment, and the elder girl, who represented industry in the house, got up to meet her. The younger half got up in a sort of alarm, but sat down again quickly.

"I am not deserving of this sympathy," he said to her. "I have heard the whole story of your kindness, and I have hastened to acknowledge it. I have been thinking over it these two days, and it has affected me more than I know how to express. I have long lost *that* art, and, I suppose, must be content to appear ungracious. But I *am* grateful; and I hope to be able to learn to show it."

The young girl lifted her soft eyes and burning cheeks towards his face. "It was nothing," she said eagerly. "You say far too much of it; and—and I was so glad to have done it; oh, and so glad that you are well!" Then she became ashamed of this burst; and the confusion, from this opposition of shame and enthusiasm, had a very pretty effect.

"If I had some way of showing how I feel, and what I feel to *you*," he went on, "and to Captain Diamond," he added hastily, "I should be quite glad, if I could only discover some way."

With much hesitation, first being about to speak, then checking

herself, she at last said hurriedly, "If you would only make me—that is, us—a little promise,—one little promise,—as a sort of votive offering on your being restored to health."

"I shall indeed," he said smiling, "whatever it may turn out."

"It is," she went on, "to—to take a *little* more interest in life—to enjoy the world a little; and believe this, that there are those who like, and who are willing to like and esteem you; in short, to try and be a *little* happy. Oh, if you would do this,—and if you were to try, you would succeed,—you would make uncle and us all so glad."

She was colouring again, and confused at the boldness of this speech. Hermit, Trappist, almost Stylites at his heart, as Mr. Tillotson had tried to be, it was impossible not to be a little warmed at this natural ardour and candour. He spoke to her more warmly than he had done to any one for years. "I do promise you," he said; "and I *shall* try."

Uncle Diamond came in at this point. He noticed her glowing face of pleasure, and a sort of gladness also in Mr. Tillotson's eyes. He was delighted himself. "This is something," he said, limping over for a chair. "Oh, this is grand! We shall soon have you on your legs altogether, Tillotson. Now, I tell you what; you'll stop and take your bit of dinner with us, won't you?"

"No, no," said the other; "not to-day."

"Never fear, we shall take care of you. Do, now; just to oblige us—just to celebrate the recovery!"

"Another day," said Mr. Tillotson, rising hastily.

The girl now spoke. "I thought you had made us a sort of promise about the world? And this is the way you begin!"

A faint shade of impatience came over Mr. Tillotson's face. "It does not suit me," he said. "I cannot as yet, you know. I know it seems ungracious, but——"

He saw a wounded expression on her face, and that she was biting her red lips in what seemed vexation. In a moment he had thought of the precious service she had rendered him, her little chivalrous act, and felt that he *was* ungracious and ungrateful. He sat down again. "Well—I think I must stay."

Joy came suddenly into both faces, like a fire that has been stirred. "Give me the hand," said Uncle Diamond. "You are a good fellow, and we'll make a day of it, and a night of it too." This brave, gentle Captain had, all his life long, been "making days of it" for other people, and delighted in nothing so much.

On this day he was in surprising spirits. He went out himself to cater. He chose "a fine fish," a thing for which he had a great admiration, and which he had an old campaigner's skill in choosing. "The Captain's haddock" was often seen on the sloping marble table at the fishmonger's, carefully put aside; for, though his orders were of a slender and unfrequent sort, this dear gentleman met with

universal respect and attention as he went marketing, and his haddock brought him more deference than the costly turbot did to the marquis's housekeeper. He came home in triumph.

After dinner, when the ladies were gone, the Captain came back to his favourite subject. "Poor little girl! she has a great spirit. And oh, Tillotson, if you knew what she has been to me! And such sense! See even in that getting you to promise! Why, I should have been a year before I could have gone about such a thing. Now look here, Tillotson. What you ought to do is this. I am an old fogie that ought to be in one of the hospitals, and don't know how to say things in a nice roundabout way; I never got much education at the colleges (I only wish I had); but there were ten of us, and I was thought well off with a commission. But if I was in your place, and so young, I tell you what I would do. It would be the making of you."

And the Captain, whose voice was trembling a little from excitement, hoisted himself up in his chair, to set his stiff leg at ease.

"Marry, Tillotson!" he went on. "I declare I am in earnest, and speaking for your interest. I am a fogie, I know, but I mean for your good. It would make a man of you. You just want that something with warmth and life to be near you, Tillotson, and that you may like and live for, and give your honest affection to, Tillotson. Look at me, what I am come to. Our fellows used to laugh at every fellow that met a nice good girl and married her; and we thought ourselves very wise. And even when Colonel—now Sir Thomas—Cameron came back to the regiment with a Scotch girl, I though. he had done a foolish thing. But he was on the right side of the hedge. Egad, he was, Sir! Look at Sir Thomas Cameron now, with his fine family, like a prince, and look at Foostering Tom—Tom Diamond, I mean, until the last month or so."

It was long since the Captain had made such a speech. There was a surprising weight in it, both of matter and of eloquence. It had its effect on Mr. Tillotson, who said nothing for a few moments.

"Thank you," he said—"thank you heartily. It is kind and good advice."

Very often afterwards the Captain brought on this subject, and always with the same honest earnestness. He did, indeed, believe from his honest soul that this was the only panacea for the reformation of his friend. He almost wearied him.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTAIN'S SCHEME.

But soon our good Captain noticed a great alteration in his younger niece. Latterly Mr. Tillotson had become more and more absorbed in his banking, or at least affected to be. And he scarcely came at all to the house. The Captain at first was mystified, and then dreadfully grieved.

"It is all my own stupid meddling," he said to himself, sorrowfully, "God forgive me! I am an old Botch. Why couldn't I let him alone? And that poor child!"

That poor child had, indeed, become first silent, then very fretful and solitary. The delicate appreciation of the Captain saw the change almost at first, and he knew not what to do. He felt that his were clumsy fingers, that any handling would only irritate the wound. And so he often sat looking at her with wistful eyes, and trying to soothe her in a hundred ways. There was but one way, and he often took his stick and limped away to the bank, to try and bring his friend. Which usually ended in his coming away, saying sadly to himself, "I am an old Botch. Nothing in the world but an old Botch."

The other girl, whose natural attitude seemed to be always that of one working for an eternity, he took into his confidence. "What is over her, dear?" he asked, anxiously. "Now, could you make out? She has told you?"

"No, uncle," she said, "she has not. But I know, and you know."

"And see now—what are we to do?" said he. "I'd put my eyes upon sticks to bring it right. But I don't know how. Tom Diamond has found out at the end of his life that he's nothing but a Botch—more shame for him. I'd better leave it alone, and leave everything alone."

"Poor child," said she, sewing still, "nothing can be done for her in that case. She must cure herself, as hundreds have been forced to cure themselves before now."

"I don't understand it," said Uncle Diamond, in deep grief. "I wish I did. If I say anything, it seems to me only to make her worse. But that's only like me."

"Better leave her to herself, dear uncle," said the girl.

The Captain sighed. That night he met an old brother-officer, one of the good-as-gold set, who esteemed Tom Diamond. This gentleman insisted on giving him a dinner at the military club. And the Captain, always gratified at this sort of attention, not for himself,

but because it reflected honour on the steadiness and constancy of the service to old friends, came home to announce the news.

At the same time he made many humble apologies to his dear girls, but he hoped they would not mind his going, for Hodgson was a true old friend, &c.

The Captain dined with his true old friend, and had a delightful evening. As he limped into the club, where none but gentlemen of the service were allowed to be entertained as guests, he was received by the waiters with all the honours of war. His lameness brought him many marks of distinction. He felt not a little proud of the grandeur and magnificence of the establishment; for, with that old delicacy, he had long ago withdrawn from all military associations, as having no title to them. He called himself, with modest disparagement, "a feather-bed soldier." It was a happy night with Hodgson, who had "gone on" and held by the service, and the two talked together over Colonel Cameron, and Trevelyan, and the duel, and the time that General Shortall came down for the inspection and found out that "Tom" had his sword fastened on with a bit of red tape, some one having stolen "Tom's" belt.

It was a charming night, and they talked over how "Tom" should join that club forthwith, and how he ought "by rights," in spite of all the stuff about feather-bed soldiers, to have been in it centuries ago. And he came home, limping slowly, as was his wont, and very much pleased. Next morning, at breakfast, he would tell his "girls," in his own dramatic way, of the whole scene, and of all that Hodgson had said and told. The Captain had a key of his own, and let himself in, shutting the door to very softly, and taking off his shoes with infinite precautions for fear of disturbing the hard-worked woman who slept in a sort of sentry-box at the end of the passage. "How she lives there and has her health, the creature," the Captain often said, compassionately, "the Lord only knows!" But, at the same time, he gave her many a half-crown to make up for this want of accommodation. He then stole up stairs softly, went to the drawing-room where his light was left for him, and entered, still softly. The Captain was shocked and ashamed to find that it was two o'clock. The light was burning, and there was some one sitting there, but who it was it was hard to say, for it was a girl with her head bent forward on the table, and pressed against a book. Some little noise from the handle of the door roused her.

"My goodness!" said the Captain, starting back, as a worn, tearful, miserable face was lifted to him. "My dear, darling girl!" he went on, limping up to the table, "what is all this? What has happened?"

The heated face, which was almost marked with crimson streaks from weeping, looked at him wildly a moment. Then she rose, ran over to put her arms about him, hide her face against his chest, and said, "Oh uncle, uncle! I am very wretched."

The Captain soothed her like a mother; she was sobbing hysterically.

"Now, now, ah! *now*," he said, "don't: be a good child. All shall come right in time" (with wonderful instinct he knew what was wrong); "leave it to me—to old Tom. He'll set his old head at work—and this very night, too; come, sit down there, pet. Tell me about it, and don't be afraid I'm your friend against all the world."

"Oh, uncle," she went on, "what have I done to him, that he should treat me in this way? I never injured him. It is so cruel; all because I—I——"

"I know, dear," said the Captain, still soothing, "all because you like him. It isn't a crime. There's nothing to be ashamed of in it. There hasn't been a fine girl in the world that didn't like a man that was worthy of her, or didn't find one either. Never fear, dear. I'll set the business right; leave it to me."

"No, no," said she, still hiding her face; "not for the world."

"Yes, *for* all the world, dear," said the Captain; "at least, we'll talk of it in the morning. This is a dreadful hour to be sitting up to, wearing out those nice eyes writing so! Ah, I'd like to see that journal of yours! Though as to sitting up, I needn't speak; I ought to be ashamed of myself, and have more sense. But poor Hodgson was so kind. He stood to me long ago, and I cannot help it. Come now, dear, bed's the place, and the feathers; and if this old fogie's head of mine can think on anything, you may depend on Tom Diamond."

Next morning, when Mr. Tillotson was wearily struggling through papers—for the dealing with which he ought to have had a shovel and a cart—the Captain came limping in clean, bright, and whiskers curled with the old French irons, and glistening in the sunshine. The bishop's hat was in his hand. He sat down and talked to his friend for some time a little restlessly. In truth, he did not know how to begin.

"My dear Tillotson," he said, at last, "I was dining with old Charley Hodgson—a real good one of the old set—at the fine club they have got now, and after talking over our old stories till two o'clock, as old fellows always will, I came home. When I got to the drawing-room and thought to find every soul in bed—now what do you think? There was a poor girl sitting up with her face down on the table, and I declare to you, Tillotson, before Heaven, with eyes worn out of her head with sobbing and crying—I was near crying myself, like an old fogie as I am—and her face all drawn and flushed: the creature!"

The other started and cast down his eyes. He knew at once whom the Captain alluded to.

"It's no use calling this or hiding that," said the Captain, gloomily. "I am no good at that sort of thing. I never could do

it. • It's only fair to tell you. The child's pining away. She eats no more than a sparrow does. And I tell you, Tillotson, it goes to my heart to see it, and it would go to yours, too; and, before God, I don't know what to do."

Mr. Tillotson said, in some agitation, "What can I do? I feared this, and suspected it."

"Why should you fear it?" said the Captain, gloomily. "She's as bright as a jewel—too good for any man; even for you, my boy. I shouldn't tell you this. I think, if she knew it, the creature would die. But you can't see her wasting and pining. I can't bear to think of her, as I saw her last night—I can't. And I know it's hard upon you, too."

"But what would you have me do?" said Mr. Tillotson, irresolutely. "No woman could think of me. I have lived long enough to find *that* out," he added, bitterly. "And, indeed, I could make no woman happy."

"You don't know," said the Captain, warming and growing excited. "You could, I'll swear. You'll make *her* happy. You're the boy to do it! She'll make a man of you—she'll worship the ground you walk on—be your slave, and that sort of thing. And see—see here, Tillotson," added the Captain, with what seemed very marked meaning, "you ought to: for *you'll save her life!* I tell you, *you* will; and she saved yours, you know."

Mr. Tillotson's lip curled a little. "I know, and hope I never shall forget the obligation to which you allude. But——"

"Before Heaven, I never meant it," said the Captain, starting up in an agony. "I did not, on my soul, Tillotson, no—only I don't know how to say things. My dear friend, you must forgive me. But when I think of this poor child last night, I lose my wits. Do try," he added, piteously, "and do make out something for her, and you won't regret it. Tom Diamond tells you so!"

Tom Diamond said no more then. He had worked himself into a heat, and seemed to be almost pleading for pardon for some act.

"I shouldn't have done this," he said, as he went away. "I know I shouldn't. If she knew it, I declare I believe she would drop down and die. But I don't want to see her miserable, and you miserable, Tillotson, all for want of a little speaking out. If I knew *how* to speak out and *come round* the point like some of the clever fellows, I'd do it. But I never was trained. You don't mind me, Tillotson—do you?" he added, wistfully. "Only an old fogie, but a well-meaning fogie. And that poor thing at home. I mean it well for *her*, Tillotson."

"My dear friend," Mr. Tillotson said, taking his hand kindly, "I know you now by this time, and all your goodness, and what a deep interest you have taken in me—more than, indeed, I deserve. The world is only too good to me; and I suppose if I was but sensible enough to meet it half way—Perhaps I am, as you say, only shutting

myself out from bright gardens, and flowers, and paradise, and happiness. Perhaps I might succeed in getting rid of myself, or changing myself. And so I promise you now that I will think seriously of what you have said to me. But of course not a word to——"

"As I am a living man—no!" said the Captain, fervently. "Indeed, no—not for the whole world! This is noble of you, Tillotson. And you send me away I can't *tell* you how happy." And the Captain limped down stairs joyfully. He went home, and was in great spirits for the rest of the day. During dinner he laughed and talked very cheerfully.

The girl, with her flushed cheeks, sat silently opposite. After dinner, when the elder had gone to fetch the eternal work, she stole over to him suddenly, and whispered, "Don't mind what I said last night, while my head was all confused. Promise me not to think of it——"

"I will," said the Captain, readily. "Honour bright! There's the hand! Now!"

Thus the life went on. Gradually Mr. Tillotson got into the habit of going to the Captain's. The sight of the faces there, the tone of that fireside, tranquillised him. He began to find that he had greater control over his mind, could find strength to close the great gates against the past, and keep the crowd of old images from rushing in tumultuously as they did at home in his lonely rooms. Not that he lost the image of the old cathedral casket, and what it held. Did he dare to open it and look in, the old perfume would have poured in and intoxicated him and brought back the old malady. Now he had a firmer grasp of himself, could look more coldly and even hopefully to the future. He hesitated a long time, undecided.

A little incident at last decided him. He used to have sent to him from the old cathedral town the weekly paper of the place, the *St. Alans Courant*, which seemed to revive for him its flavour and colouring. Latterly (part of his new programme), he had ordered it to be discontinued; but they still sent it. His eye glanced over it mechanically, but fell upon the word "Marriage." Then he read one evening in the usual florid language appropriate to such events, that it "was rumoured that a lovely and accomplished ward of one of the most influential gentlemen of our town would shortly *give her hand* to a young gentleman in the Company's service, also favourably known to the citizens of St. Alans. Quod faustum," added the local journal.

"Give her hand," repeated Mr. Tillotson. "There is the last act—chapter and verse, too. So be it: the age of self-sacrifice is over." He longed to begin his new life. He was to go to the Captain's to dinner that evening. He thought a good deal at intervals during the day, and finally, when the hour was near, set off hastily. He

found the Captain and his younger niece waiting there. As usual, her face coloured suddenly as he entered. He presently made a sign to the Captain, which that intelligent old officer understood at once, and who, with some ostentation and scarcely dramatic excuse about "seeing to the haddock," limped away. Did the young girl, intelligent also, see this sign? But she made no protest.

"I have come," said Mr. Tillotson, going over to her hastily, "to say that I cannot stay this evening——" Her face fell. "But I have something to say to you, if you will allow me, and will hear me now."

She hung down her head, but could say nothing.

"I have been thinking," he went on, "over and over again, of your conduct on that night. It is only now I am beginning to see its full force. I must have been ungrateful, and——"

"No, no, no!" she said, softly; "indeed, no. You have thanked me more than enough already."

"Thanks are not what I am going to offer," he said. "I am going to ask you to let me lay myself under a still heavier obligation; strange thanks, you will say. But my life has hitherto been a raw blank day of coldness and misery. I have been living in a sort of delusion. I have thought that all men were cold, and heartless, and hateful; that women were, at the least, indifferent—and, forgive me—selfish; and that the world was all barrenness. Now I have found that there is some warmth. I have seen kindness and unselfishness, and believe that there is yet more to be discovered, if I look for it. Will you help me? I have little to offer. Not a warm heart, I fear; but certainly a grateful one. Not what is called love, but what may become love. I want to live. Will you help me?"

This was his proposition. She was very natural and romantic, as has been described; confusion, surprise, delight, went rushing to her cheeks. She could not speak for some moments; then said, perhaps in an unmaidenly way, "Oh, how good, how kind, how noble! I could sink down at your feet."

"I will do what I can," he went on; "and you will make a generous allowance. I am accustomed to the old hard and cold ways."

"Oh, it is not that," she said, starting. "Ah! but this is all kindness and gratitude—what they call gratitude."

"No, no," he said; "I want to begin to live again—to be human. And will you not help me?"

"With my whole life and soul," she said, fervently, and giving him her hand. Suddenly she added, "But you will go back. You will think of this again, and go back. To-morrow—in a week, or two weeks?"

"Never," he said; "you don't know me yet, I see. Not if the world were to change."

He went away soon after, and met the Captain on the stairs. The

Captain looked at him wistfully, and without speaking—too delicate to put a question when there was such uncertainty. But Mr. Tillotson took his hand and half whispered, "It is all done! I must now try and be happy, for I have a great chance of happiness."

CHAPTER XI.

GREAT PROSPECTS FOR MR. TILNEY.

The great Foncier Capital Company was a financial society of great power and influence, and had been in existence a sufficient time to acquire the respectability of age. It was willing to deal in all sorts of securities—lands, houses, rents, mortgages, bills; its principle was simply to furnish money on any security that was worth money. But what took it out of common associations was its grandeur, for everything about it was gigantic.

Some five years before, a number of enterprising Scotch and English gentlemen—money merchants as they might be called—had started the United General Foncier Credit Company under the fairest auspices. Its capital was so much, paid up, which was one of the auspices; its secretary, a busy, daring, eager man, who was to the bank what a good traveller is to a manufacturer, was another; and Mr. Bowater, M.P., chairman, and who brought connection and nobility into the concern, was the greatest auspice of all. It flourished. It had first rented the premises of a defunct insurance office in the City, which it cut up and "underpinned" in the usual way, to suit its own requirements. But soon Jenkinson, the famous semi-mediæval and fancifully Byzantine architect, was called in (a gentleman known to his friends as "Middle-age Jenkinson"), and under his direction the old insurance office was removed, and a splendid tabernacle of parti-coloured bricks erected, with an enormous deal of carving; so that acorns, foliage, mediæval monkeys and foxes totting up accounts at ledgers, and other humorous and appropriate conceits, seemed literally to overrun the house from top to bottom—to say nothing of the gilded railings and iron lace-work that edged everything that could be edged. The windows were so thoroughly Byzantine, and so much room was required for the carved clerks at the ledgers outside, that there was very little light for the living clerks inside; and Middle-age Jenkinson's spendid coronas and blue and gold gas-jets had to be lit whenever the sun was not shining out strongly. But this was a small drawback, for the Byzantine edifice drew customers, and Mr. Bowater, M.P., often

showed an influential customer the carved monkeys totting up the accounts; and the influential customer afterwards brought other friends to see this bit of art.

"It's all allegorical, you know! Look at Amiens and Rouen cathedrals, you know! That was the real way! Cost a mint of money! But, egad, Sir, I wish you or I had a share or two in it—an original one. There's Bowater, and Tillotson, and Midgely, and two or three more, they keep it all snug among themselves. Knowing fellows, those!"

On the lower floor was the bank, which ran back in acres of counters and little frosted glass partitions, behind which were glimpses of El Dorado drawers, laid out with coin and what seemed whole cushions of notes. It was a charming perspective, and these golden passages, paved with glittering tiles, were always crowded; for the bank was doing good business, and paying fifteen per cent.

Up stairs, on the next story, were board-rooms, where the directors assembled, and where Mr. Samuel Bowater, M.P., sat in a green morocco arm-chair, and looked at bills through a golden eye-glass, and said, "I think we may take this, Mr. Smiles, eh? Pretty safe here, Mr. Smiles." And then, transferring the golden glass to his nose, with the black ribbon trailing over his cheek like a snake, the chairman would sign the paper; not, of course, the mere vulgar tradesmen's notes-of-hand, which were arranged below, but gentlemen's securities—gentlemen who wanted five and ten thousand pounds.

"So you think St. Alans will do, Tillotson?" said the chairman. "Very well. And who should we send down to work the thing—Smiles? What do you say to Smiles? He is such a business man. He has a wonderful head—such a long head. He will draw all the silver out of every corner in the place. He cares for nothing *but* business; lives, eats, and drinks, and sleeps business—ha! ha! I know Smiles."

Knowing Smiles so well, and, besides, being chairman, he had no difficulty in naming that officer to the post.

"A very fair list of local directors," continued Mr. Bowater, tapping the paper with his golden glass. "Some good names here. Tilney alone would carry us through. One of the best old country families. My friend, Lord Oxberry, knew him when he was about the duke. There is not enough of good blood brought into money. It has often occurred to me that the gentlemanly interest has not been half worked enough. The Court might be looked to more. There is a mine of wealth all up and down there," continued Mr. Bowater, a little querulously.

Then other business was gone into; but before the board adjourned, Mr. Smiles, the man who was all business, was appointed to be the St. Alans manager; and it was determined that the good and suitable house fixed on by Mr. Tillotson should forthwith be purchased and converted with all speed into a first-class banking-

house. Mr. Smiles and his family had already gone down to St. Alans, and were established there.

At St. Alans it soon transpired that a great London bank was about opening an important branch in "the very heart" of the town. This discovery was partly owing to some rumours set on foot by the local paper; but a good deal to the behaviour of Mr. Tilney himself, whose Malacca stick was in eternal flourish, like a gigantic compass. A very few days later a trellis-work of scaffolding had crept up its front. By-and-by they had the gorgeous grocer's shop completely cut away, and its whole face hung perilously in the air, suspended like a card. This was the fashion of the United Foncier Company. They rarely built a house; but they performed pantomimic miracles in their transformation of old crazy tenements into gorgeous banking palaces. Plate-glass began to glisten. Clean wire blinds then got behind the plate-glass, and the rustics, who passed on market-days, saw with amazement men laying down a gorgeous tesselated pavement. As for the fittings, the mahogany counters, over which the gold was to be shovelled, we should have read the account in the local paper. The *St. Alans Banner*, who was admitted to a private view, and was perfectly ravished with it all, spoke of it as "our new bank," and dwelt on "the courtesy of the efficient secretary" (which meant the sherry and the biscuits of the efficient secretary, served in the board-room), but did not report what were the services of Mr. Tilney on this famous occasion, who was perhaps no less efficient in his way.

"Look at this," he would say to the *Banner*, patting the counters affectionately, "*there's* solid mahogany! The finest we could get anywhere. Yes, we had to put the spur on. We ran it all up in no time. We have done our part, I *think*, and it only remains for the people to do the rest. As long as they stand by us, we shall by them, come weal, come woe. We have put our shoulder to the plough (not the usual thing put to the plough), and Heaven helps those who help themselves."

"I don't know how the thing will work, I am sure," said the secretary. "I suppose I shall pull it through somehow. As for compliments and easy money, and that sort of thing, they need not expect it. We shall have but one rule. If any one brings me a good bill I shall cash it; if a bad bill, he may take it away. If they bring us money, we shall take care of it for them. There."

And with these principles Mr. Smiles started the bank.

Indeed, this idea of being suddenly raised to enormous power and affluence, by being appointed to this post of local director, took possession of his mind. "The responsibility is awful," he would say. "There is something grand in having a power delegated to you to sit in judgment on your fellow-creatures' affairs—judge of their bills; say to this one 'Have so much;' to another, 'Take your bill, Sir, and write fifty.' You remember that fine parable?" This delusion,

too, happily for him, spread to his friends and acquaintances, and, more happily still, to those to whom he was indebted. A very large class indeed these latter. Waterman, the butcher; Griffiths, a splendid grocer, and who, with that happy trade versatility required by a country town, combined all sorts of interests.

Mr. Tilney went round to these creditors with his stick, and stalked into Waterman's establishment, to which he had resorted every day, having as he himself said, "a fine eye for meat." "Well, Waterman, you have heard? They have put me in the new bank—over all the gold and silver. All the notes too, Waterman. Anything, of course, that I can do for you, in my little way, of course, Waterman——" Waterman, a dry, surly man, with an awful cutlass hanging at his waist in a sort of surgical instrument case, answered shortly, "I want nothin', Sir, but what's properly coming to me. I can pay my way without compliments and the like. And now that you're settling down in all these notes and gold, I hope the first thing'll be to let honest, hard-working men come by their own." "Quite right, Waterman; you may depend on me now. You shall have the very first cheque I draw on our bank. There. A noble fore-quarter there—real prime meat," he added, touching it here and there with his stick. "Put it aside for me, will you, Waterman? Have it weighed. Just three days' more keeping, and it will be in noble order for cutting. Ah, Mr. Waterman, do we ever think where all good blessings come from?"

Mr. Waterman, chopping and dividing joints with extraordinary neatness with his scimitar, said half aside to his customer, "There's your bill, Mr. Tilney; it's not got long to run; so you'll look to it. No quarter this time, you know." And the cutlass went home significantly into the surgical-looking sheath. Mr. Tilney went from Waterman to the gorgeous grocer, where there was a "pass-book" with bewildering entries, crowded with all the omnigenous items which Mr. Tilney had found more convenient to purchase at the one house. To the chief of this establishment Mr. Tilney spoke in the same cheerful tone of "drawing his first cheque" in his favour.

Norbury was a short, bald-headed lay canon of the cathedral, of cheerful and jovial habits, on which a narrow stipend, with a wife and six children, were no drag. This gentleman trolled a stave, and was famous for intoning a kind of hunting melody called When Aurora the Goddess of Morning, in a lusty and boisterous tenor, which gave great delight to the squires and yeomen, and the loose gentlemen who lived principally with that noble animal the horse. On account of these tastes, Mr. Norbury was not at all in favour with the dean and magnates of the cathedral; at whom, though, as he often said plainly "over a tumbler," he could "snap his fingers." Respect, however, for the cloth was a restraint on his language; but with regard to Fugle, and one or two more of subservient habits, and whom he forcibly called the "Dean's Lickspittles," he gave

himself full indulgence. That "toad-eater Fugle, with his squeaking penny-trumpet voice—it's disgusting to see the way he grovels before Topham. I should be ashamed to do it." Mr. Tilney liked Norbury's company; for, as he said, "he came of a good stock, and the gentlemen were dying out of the country like a sheep rot." A cousin of the canon's, a Dick or Tom Norbury, had once or twice been on guard at the Palace, and Lady Mary Norbury had apartments at Hampton Court. This, according to Mr. Tilney, "explained the whole thing." It must be said, however, that during the dean's term of residence he was not so conspicuously friendly to the canon, who was held more or less in the light of a black sheep. The black sheep was never asked to Doctor Topham's nor to the dean's parties, the reason for which the dean gave with great candour. "He was not the sort of person," he said, "you could well have at your house. And between you and me, I mean to weed our body of such Scandals on the very first opportunity."

No one had less to do with this exclusion from the dean's parties than had the wife of the Scandal; a gentle, contented creature, whose aim in life was to bring her children securely and happily into the world, give them to eat and drink, and keep them clean and "tidy." Though herself neat and "tidy," still she could not keep away from the little canon's "hutch" the air of squalor which the undue swarming of children always brings. Her husband, however, was always kind, though often desponding, especially of some evenings when he sat at home, and when there was no festivity abroad, and when he tried to be domestic, but with very poor success. There was a friend who had a snug little billiard-table in a back-room, and this was a great temptation; and the provokingly thirsty character of the game was remedied by glistening tumblers upon the chimney-piece opposite, from which each player, as he passed, took a friendly sip. Every one said Norbury was excellent company, "a good creature at the bottom;" with, "it was a pity he had chosen that line, you know;" and an additional pity that the man was "so infested" with children. Still he led this cheerful life; and strangers who came to the cathedral, and saw his shiny bald head and tawny hair in the ranks of the holy men in the choir, lifting up their voices to praise their Maker, thought he must be every bit as seraphic as Fugle and the other divine and white-robed songsters. But they did not know, nor did he himself know, that Doctor Topham was busy trying to get "that Scandal" out of their body.

Mr. Tilney was now at the green door with a knocker made of brass knobs, where his friend Norbury lived. That ecclesiastic looked over the banisters in his shirt-sleeves, and many smaller heads were seen about his knees, and called out to him that he would be down in a minute. The sickly Mrs. Norbury came out to him, embossed all over with children. For she had one in her arms, a couple lay in ambuscade behind her skirt, and about herself, poor

patient lady, there was the habitual outspeaking air as of yet more children.

"Oh, Mr. Tilney," she said, "if we had only a little! Charles has so many mouths to feed! And there is the dean so cruelly 'down' on him. There was a stall vacant, and though it's his turn, he passed him over, and gave it to Mr. Nelson. It is very, very harsh."

Mr. Norbury entered now, pulling on his coat. "You heard, Tilney?" he said. "That's a nice successor of the Apostles! I should like to have the preaching of a sermon at him. I'd make him know his catechism. There's that Nelson has been here only a couple of years, and I have been here sixteen. Twenty pounds a year," he added, looking with a sudden wistfulness that was almost painful, on the little heads that were about him, "would have come in very nicely—made a great difference. By the way," and his tone became cheerful, "we had a great match of billiards last night. Why weren't you there? One of the officers. I gave him a beating. I'm to give him his revenge to-night; so be down, will you? I'm going with you, Tilney. Run up, Jack, for my hat. Is my tie clean, Jane? No? No matter; it'll do. I hope we shall meet Topham. Come, Tilney."

When they got out, he said earnestly, "Now that you are in the bank, Tilney, I hope you'll give a lift to a poor devil. This has cut me up awfully, and poor Jenny too. It's very cruel; for to tell you the truth, I thought Topham was more of a Christian, and would do what he thought his duty, although he *did* dislike me. I don't know where to turn to. Unless, I was thinking, that you might like——"

"What, what, my poor Norbury?" said Mr. Tilney, kindly. "Tell me. My heart bleeds for you."

"I mean you could get me a bit of paper 'done' among your banking people. Only sixty pounds; that would give me breathing time, and help us to get a leg of mutton for the children."

"Is that all?" said Mr. Tilney. "To be sure. I'll speak to Smiles, and make him do it. We are anxious to get business, and everything comes in nicely."

"No, will you?" said the other in deep gratitude. "You see I only want room to stretch my arms a little. This fellow is annoying me so. Poor Jenny is for my going on my knees and crying peccavi; but the parish before *that*. No, no; let him keep out of my way, or I won't answer for myself—as regards my tone, I mean. I am so dry about the throat; aren't you?"

"I declare," said Mr. Tilney, with surprise, "if this isn't Hiscoke's. He has really the finest Brown Particular." And the two gentlemen went in.

It was put off, however, a long time. Meanwhile the believers in the bank, as the dawning of prosperity for Mr. Tilney, began to grow a little impatient. He grew harassed with their importunity and

excuses. His faithful stick must have been weary with all the flourishes it was obliged to make in justification of its master. He grew weary himself, and used to say, taking Ada into his confidence, that "his heart was well-nigh broken with it all." As indeed we may be sure that the slow "fighting in retreat" with duns is the most harassing and heart-breaking of all struggles. There was a hill outside the town to which he used to wander away, where he would sit dolefully with his chin on his stick, looking down at the cathedral. Sometimes, too, he would gaze wistfully into the face of Ada, and say he was "like a hunted hare."

But there were others, too, still fighting the same irregular warfare. Behind the little old green door up the Close, which was narrow and rather awry from age, and like the green door of a caravan, where poor Norbury and his swarm lived, there was a battle more unequal, and therefore more miserable. There was the blight of squalor over them. Decent housewives going by said it was "like a Foundling Hospital," and enough "to breed a pestilence among the neighbours." A few days later Mr. Tilney, passing by on one of his gloomy saunters, was beckoned to from the window by the pale face, now much nearer to her periodic trouble than when he saw her last. He heard the sounds of a violin, and presently the canon looked over the stairs in his shirt-sleeves, with a bow in his hand.

"Down in a moment," he said. "Out of the way, chickabiddies" (addressed to the human rabbits, who had swarmed out on hearing the stranger's voice).

The canon could not find his coat. Some of the children had got it away into a corner to make a temporary bed to be occupied by at least three of them; and he came down unshaven, tuning his violin, and with a very dismal expression.

"Well," he said, "did you hear of last night?"

"No, no," said the other despondingly. "Now what happened the other night?"

"He's back, you know. Black Dick Topham returned the day before yesterday; and as ill luck would have it, I came full on him last night."

"No, God bless me!" said his friend, starting.

"Oh, Mr. Tilney," said the pale wife, wringing her hands, "can you do nothing for us—for poor Joe and the children? We shall never get over this. Oh dear, dear!"

"Hush, hush, Jenny!" said he. "There, you have set the babies off;" as indeed she had. "God bless us, and God help us too!" he added, scraping his chin with a dismal perplexity.

The "babies" were in full chorus, and could only be appeased by his playing "Terry the Grinder," accompanied by grotesque steps, which gradually interested his listeners, and finally produced loud acclamations of joy.

"A jolly tune," said the canon, tuning his fiddle on his knee, and laying his ear to it to catch the "accord." That's an old Italian violin, and you'd hardly believe what I got it for: fourteen shillings as I am a lay canon, though I mayn't be able to say that long."

"Well, about Black Dick?" said Mr. Tilney ruefully.

"Why, I was down at the Rooms, you know, knocking the balls about, last night, when I heard a row in the street, and ran out just as I am now—*in puris*, I may say, saving your presence—with a cue in one hand and my tumbler in the other. The noise had gone by, or there had been no noise, or I might have mistaken the whole thing. But I could see nothing. Spottiswood, who was there, came out too; and as a sort of bagman was passing, I said to him, "Spottiswood, I believe this old cock was at the bottom of it all." As I live, I only meant a joke, and no more knew who it was, beyond a bagman, than the child unborn. There! What d'ye say, Tilney, to its turning out to be Black Dick, sneaking home? Was there ever such luck, Tilney? And I declare he stopped and looked me full in the face, and said, 'Very well, Mr. Norbury: this makes the climax of the scandal.' Those were his very words—'Climax of the scandal.' And I answered him at once, 'Climax it away, Black Dick, and welcome!' But I am afraid he has us this time. Goose cooked, eh, Tilney?"

He looked at him wistfully, and again scratched the broad yellow shining forehead. Mr. Tilney, really moved, shook his head.

The pale wife again struck in: "Oh, Sir! Mr. Tilney! *what* is to be done for us? Do ask Joey to go up to him and beg his pardon."

"Now, Jenny, none of that. We must only all take tickets for the workhouse."

An elder child, who had learnt the significance of this dreaded name, broke into a subdued cry. Its brethren, always ready to support a member of their order, on whatever occasion, followed heartily; and in a moment their father was jocularly and with great spirit playing "Terry the Grinder," and with the happiest effect.

"But," said he, stopping suddenly in his music, "there's another thing. Look here. There's brown paper, Sir!" And he showed the broken corners of one of the children's little shoes. "Every one of them about the same, isn't it, Jenny?"

"Nothing," said she, piteously, "between their little feet and the ground—nothing."

"And there's Jackey," he went on, hopelessly scratching his bald crown with the "scroll" of his violin, with only a rag of a great-coat to go out in. The creature's famished. It's all got into a wisp; and no wonder: he's been wearing it these three years, and it was a cheap thing then. And there's the little joint for to-day; it's coming, but the fellow is to be paid on leaving it. I am going down

now to the Rooms, to pick up a couple of half-crowns, if I can, over 'the balls.'"

The canon's coat was then brought to him, and the two gentlemen set forth, interchanging their troubles.

The canon was left sitting in his normal attitude in his shirt-sleeves, with the violin not very far away, while "the wife," with a mollusc adhering to her "darning," working, and now literally "piecing" a little shoe—a task that would have seemed hopeless to a skilled shoemaker. Before an hour she would have accomplished it. He was in one of his hopeless moods.

"I don't know what's to become of me," he said. "It is like walking out into a bog. Even at knocking the balls about I am getting to be no good. A common lad got five shillings out of me last night. I may as well give up at once as go on; it will be cheaper in the end." And he began to whistle dismally.

Before the mother could answer, cries and even howls were heard from an adjoining room, where a crowd had gathered and upset a washhand-stand, and with the fatal stupidity of their class, had proclaimed their misfortune to the world. She had to dart away to restore order, and Mr. Norbury was left alone. His eyes fell vacantly on the violin, and, still "honing" over his sorrows, he began to tune it on his knee, and had presently glided into a "stiff" variation on "De Beriot's fifth air," which he went over half a dozen times. After many repetitions and a growing facility in execution, he had quite forgotten his misfortunes; and as he began it for the seventh time, he threw back his head and said aloud, "Faith, I'll play this for them at our next Philharmonic."

Suddenly came a light step. He looked up (he was in the midst of the groaning, squealing, pork-killing variation produced by playing three notes at a time) and saw Ada—Miss Millwood. He became conscious of his rough chin and collarless throat and shirt-sleeves, and fled. Mrs. Norbury, with a worn look, well balanced with a baby hung before her, in front of whose person she managed to ply her fingers, came down to her. No wonder she was glad to see her, for Ada was a ministering angel to that squalid family. She brought with her light and air and cleanliness; and the children hearing her sweet voice (or perhaps the scouts, who were always on duty, hanging out of the windows, had passed the word on) would have poured down and mobbed her, but that their father, on his road to shaving, had promptly shut to the little gate that was at the top of the stairs.

The two ladies talked together a long time. Ada's low, soft voice filled the room with a sweeter music than that of Mr. Norbury's violin. She gave her friend such comfort as was to be found in the common platitudes of comfort, but with her they were not platitudes, but substantial comfort.

"You know," said she, "we have all troubles of our own, and

must have them. Dear Mr. Tilney has *his*—I have mine. Life wouldn't be life without them."

Then the two women opened their confidences, and Mrs. Norbury, with that fulness of detail and colour which reaches almost to gossip, told the story of their griefs—what they feared, and what they had *not* to hope, and especially that late passage with the dreaded Black Dick.

"Joey does everything for the best, and thinks of us all in everything he does. Often and often he has brought us home a dinner out of his little game of billiards. But, dear Miss Millwood, I am trembling and trembling to think of this business. Joey doesn't see it as I do. But Dr. Topham, I know, doesn't like him, and when he comes back—oh, Miss Millwood, I fear——"

Even on this view Ada had comfort. They knew the dean, her uncle did, and she herself did a little. The two found a comfort in each other's society, and interchanged their sorrows, though the balance was with Mrs. Norbury. Something else passed between them, for Ada had a little hoard of her own, a "trifle of interest money," that Mr. Tilney paid down with scrupulosity and enormous flourishing (as if it were his stick), delivering a lecture at the same time on the value of money. These visits, apart from such "testimonials," were in themselves as good as gold.

CHAPTER XII.

A GLEAM OF HOPE.

THINGS, however, were hurrying on a little rapidly. Dr. Topham's daughter was married to a soldier, a baronet's nephew, and the ceremony was performed with great magnificence at the baronet's London house by the dean himself, "assisted by the Reverend Arthur Honeydew, cousin of the bride, and the Reverend Doctor Bulstrode, incumbent of St. Cunegonde's, Liverpool," as indeed Mrs. Tilney had read in the copy of the *Morning Plush* sent to her by a friend. "The dear dean!" she said to her female friends, in consultation over the event. "What a trial for him! As for the girl, she was a plain thing, and I wonder they got any decent man to take her."

After the conventionally "happy pair" had gone to the baronet's seat in the country, the dean had been taken great notice of by the baronet himself. "I really like you, dean," said the baronet,

with his hand on the decanter. "You are one of the breakwaters, if I may use the expression, against the alarming rush of new opinions. A few more men like you, and we should not be in the state we are in. You must come down to Truncheon Hall, and we can talk it over. The dean went down eventually, as many were destined to know. For, hereafter, he was accustomed to date things from this year of his Hegira; saying, "The year before I went to Truncheon;" or "Let me see, not long after I returned from Truncheon." The Sir Thomas or Sir William who was the lord of Truncheon had a very long family, with two dull sons in the Church; and it may have been the position of these youths as hopeless curates, who were neither popular nor likely to "draw," nor get on in any way, that gave the baronet such a desponding view of the Church. The dean was pleased to take a fancy to one of these youths when he met him at Truncheon; to whom, one night—when Mr. Dean had taken in to dinner Lady Grey de Malkyn herself, and had even heard her ladyship say he was a "charming Churchman"—the baronet alluded with a comic despondency. "As for you, Charlie, you must make up your mind to a stall in the workhouse, unless you can get your friend the dean there to do something for you—ha! ha! *I* see what he is at, dean—ha! ha! I have had my eye on him for some time—ha! ha! dean. Uncommon good that—ha! ha! You must not tell Lady Grey, though. No, no."

"Well," said Mr. Dean, balancing himself, "I am afraid, if her ladyship were to ask me anything, I couldn't well refuse. So I hope you won't put it into her head."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared the Sir Thomas or Sir William. "Uncommon good again. The dean has us everywhere. Whatever window we look out of, he flanks us with another."

"The dean," continued the baronet, in a low but audible voice, to a country gentleman who was like a theatrical supernumerary at this feast—"the dean is a man so practical—so going straight to his point—that really, even to carry out his joke, he *would* get that boy a stall. Upon my word I believe he would. Remarkable tenacity of character."

No wonder the dean often dwelt upon that visit to Truncheon. Never had he before received such homage. He came up from Truncheon, waited on the bishop—then not in residence—and had several conferences with him on the state of the cathedral. There was one "painful scandal" which he wished to bring before him, and which he did bring before him. This intermediate process delayed matters a little; but things were gradually hurrying on to a crisis. Bills were rushing to maturity with the unnatural speed common to these securities; dates fixed by solemn promises and asseverations were coming round. Tradesmen's voices rose yet higher and more insolently, and soft voices pleading became of no avail. Still, the old routine life went on. Doctor Fugle chanting

with more than his seraphic force, even though the "season" was not "on," and taking off his surplice as he got under the far arch, out of sight of the congregation, in a manner, it must be said, very unlike a seraph's.

"You see, Jenny," said Mr. Norbury, now playing the fifth air with surprising freshness, from constant practice, "I was right. Black Dick will be afraid to lay a finger upon me."

"Yes," said Mrs. Jenny, gratefully, "dear Joe. Thanks to Providence. And now you must promise me, for my sake, to be more obedient to the dean, and respectful. You know he is dean, after all. *Won't* you promise me?" And Mrs. Jenny put her hands into a praying attitude—at least, as well as the unfailing and adherent baby would allow her.

"Well, for your sake, Jenny, I'll try," said Mr. Norbury. "Now, just listen and see how I shall astonish them at our Philharmonic next week;" and he gave her that groaning variation "in thirds" which he himself had christened, with some appropriateness it must be confessed, "the pig's agony."

Of these days, too, Mr. Tilney, who had become very disconsolate and moody, went about, dwelling often on what he called the "tyranny" of Smiles to him. "I made that man, Sir," he said, lashing a thistle deliberately. "Who was the first person they came to, Sir? It was I made the whole concern, lock, stock, and barrel. They will divide fifteen per cent. How do they get that, I should like to know? Fact is, Sir," and he dropped his voice, that Smiles *is not a gentleman*. It won't last, mark me. You may pick up a sovereign here and sixpence there; but you must have gentle blood, Sir; gentle manners, Sir; and, Sir, gentle*men*. It'll collapse; blow up, Sir. What's this wretched guinea to me on Board-days? Oh, it's very bad, Sir."

But there was yet a great surprise in store for Mr. Tilney's family that very night. For when he was walking about, hopeless and desponding, a cab drove past him with luggage on the top, and a face with a military cap and grey moustaches looking from the window. In an instant he was waving his Malacca cane to the coachman, and striding up to the window.

It was Whitaker, the colonel who had been equerry to his Sailor Dook years and years ago, and who said, or was made to say, many things in the course of Mr. Tilney's conversations.

"My goodness!" said Mr. Tilney, describing "the providential character" of this meeting, "how wonderfully Providence tempers the wind! Often and often the Dook said, when he had to go to the City shows and the like, 'Let Tilney and Whitaker come. Hang it! I'll have no one else.' He went his way and I went mine. Thus it is, my dear, all our ends are shaped——"

"Do talk sense," said Mrs. Tilney, with much irreverence, "and have done with those absurd speeches. Were his sons with him?"

"He has no sons," said Mr. Tilney, sadly. "Providence—that is to say," added Mr. Tilney, correcting himself hastily, and recollecting the caution, "he never had any. One of the best men I ever knew."

"Do keep all that for your own friends, and talk like a Christian. Where is he staying?"

"With the Leighton-Buzzards," said Mr. Tilney, a little abashed. "But only think, he is at the Horse Guards now—D.A.G., my dear, enormous influence, e-normous, my dear. Always had a grateful nature too, my dear. The Dook said, 'If there is a man who sticks to his friends like wax, that man is Bob Whitaker.'"

"Well, and what did he say to you? and did you stick to *him?*" said Mrs. Tilney, with great interest.

"He said," replied Mr. Tilney, looking round mysteriously, "'Why are you in this hole, Dick? You are at the back of God-speed,' or words to that effect. 'They should have done something for you long ago; or have they now?' said Bob Whitaker."

"They—who? Well, and what did you say to that?" said Mrs. Tilney, with unjustifiable impatience. "Some folly about Providence or other."

"I said," Mr. Tilney answered, in a burst of profaneness, "that I was literally rotting away in this infernal hole, and that you were rotting away. That it was a confounded shame the court party had treated me so, leaving me to get on in my old days in this way, after all my slavery to that good-for-nothing Dook. The most selfish creature as was ever born." (Here was a way to speak of his late Majesty!)

"And what did he say?" said Mrs. Tilney, a little pleased at this burst.

"Oh, he said it was a curst shame too, and that everything he got he had to screw out of 'em."

"What did I always tell you? but you never listen. There's a man of sense!"

"He's got his nephew with him," said Mr. Tilney, suddenly.

"His heir?" said Mrs. Tilney.

"I believe so," said Mr. Tilney.

"And why couldn't you tell me *that?* There's the way. We've to do everything for ourselves. And now, what did you make out? Will he do anything for you?"

"I am sure," said Tilney, enthusiastically, "he'd lend me twenty pounds to-morrow. Bob Whitaker never refused a friend he cared for.

"Twenty pounds!" said Mrs. Tilney, with scorn. "On your peril ask him, Mr. Tilney. I see it all. Leave it to me for once, do now. We must have them to dinner. The nephew must know the girls—he can have his choice. And you can 'screw,' as you call it, something out of him. You must get up a nice elegant dinner. To

know the Leighton-Buzzards a little; ask *them*. We must do the thing well, you know."

"Get up a dinner—a dinner?" said Mr. Tilney, ruefully. "How, my dear? Where, where?"

"Where! Everywhere, of course," said Mrs. Tilney, very unreasonably. "You know how to do that sort of thing; use your wits. Someway," she added, enthusiastically, "I *feel*, if you strike home in this business, something will come out of it for the girls; who knows—perhaps on the very night itself."

"I wish to God there did," said he, mournfully. "I wish something *did* turn out for some of us. And Mrs. Whitaker, we must ask *her*. I *think* he said he had brought her."

Mrs. Tilney's face fell. "*Oh, there's a mother, is there?*" she said.

"Never mind," said he, with sudden alacrity, "we shall knock out something, and plan a very nice little dinner. I'll manage it. Yes, I see. A capital thing for one of them. Why, Bob Whitaker and I were like brothers. Yes, the very thing; and now I recollect, he was always mad upon a good dinner."

From that hour it was noticed that Mr. Tilney soared into a perfect buoyancy of spirits, and looked forward to the date of the "little dinner" as a certain deliverance from all their troubles. That little festive meal was to lead them out of shade into sunshine. Someway, too, "the pressure," as he always spoke of it, seemed to have abated a little. The "duns" had for a time, perhaps, grown weary—forborne to trouble him. Just as it had been with the early days of the bank, so it was with the dinner—it lifted him into sudden prosperity. But a change was coming about. One night he was sitting in his parlour with his family in a very ancient dressing-gown about which, we may be sure, there was a history connected with the sailor-ducal epoch, and "mapping out," as he called it, the little dinner. He had made several "maps" before this, and had gone on making them, not through any dissatisfaction at what he had done, but as a pleasure to himself for the variety. The family were busy with some preparations in their own line which had reference to their portion of the festival. Ada alone, of all, not engaged at any aim of the kind, sat silent and apart, working patiently.

"I shall look after the management myself," said Mr. Tilney. "God bless you! I wouldn't trust it out of my own hands. Toler wrote it out for me one day, with his own hand, but I lost it. And then he left it to me in his will—a kind thing; and he knew it would please more than anything in the wide world."

"Ah, exactly," said Mrs. Tilney, contemptuously—"always the way. If he had left you a hundred pounds it would have been more to the point. But you preferred a rubbishy old recipe you could get out of any cookery-book. Just like you."

"No," said he, mildly—"no, my dear, it's not so much the recipe as the thought—the nicety."

"Ah, stop it now," said Mrs. Tilney, impatiently. "Go up, Ada, and look for a pair of scissors."

In troubles of this nature, Mr. Tilney always went out for comfort. It was a gloomy, slate-coloured day, and the old cathedral, to which he had so often appealed, looked almost cold and prison-like. As he turned a corner suddenly, he saw running towards him, his white neckcloth half tied, his hair tossed, and his eyes very wild, the figure of Mr. Norbury, the canon.

Mr. Tilney stopped in astonishment, and waited for him to come up. "My God, Norbury, what is all this?"

"Tilney," said the unhappy canon, very incoherently, "I was running down to tell you. What are we to do?—tell me. Poor Jenny and the children——"

"Why, what is it?" said the other. "Good Heaven! what has happened to you?"

"We are done at last, Tilney," said he, taking off his hat, and looking vacantly under the lining. "It is as if some one had been beating me about the head. Yes, Tilney, they have done it. That wicked sneaking Topham has been biding his time, poking and prying, and picking up what he could. We thought he had forgotten it. God forgive him."

"But you don't mean to say, my dear friend, that he has deprived you——"

"——Of our bread? Yes. And there's a Christian man for you—God forgive me! I think I could go out now like one of the evicted Irish tenants, and wait for him behind a hedge. I would, and it would be no sin either, Tilney."

"No, no, my poor friend," said Mr. Tilney. "We mustn't think of those sort of things. Something will be done; something will turn up. Your friends will step in; though, indeed," he added, ruefully, "as far as I go myself, I can step in very little. But there is a Providence that shapes, you know——"

"Oh, and Jenny and the children!" said the canon, putting his hand to his eyes, as if he had suddenly awoke. "What is to become of them? Tilney, Tilney, think of that! They will turn them all into the street. I tell you, only yesterday, the poor girl, who has more wit than I have, and who has been at me for days, got me to sit down and write that Black Dick a letter that would have astonished you—a thing that I felt degraded at doing—putting my very hands under his feet. And this morning comes the answer, turning me out of my little house. He talks of a scandal, does he? Let him take care I don't do something that may scandalise the whole place and country!"

"Hush! hush!" said Mr. Tilney, looking round in great alarm, and pointing with his stick to the cathedral, as if it might betray them. "Don't talk that way, my poor Norbury. It'll do no good. Let us think; let us put our heads together, and we'll soon know

out something; though, indeed——" And he thought dismally how little he was able at that moment to "knock out" anything for himself.

"What am I to do?" said the other, who was not listening to him. "I can't stay in the house. The children have found it out, somehow, and are crying about the stairs. I have been twice to the deanery. But they won't let me in there. I suppose they think I'd fall on him, and, by the Lord, perhaps they are not far out. Ah, see! There's Miss Ada coming along. Perhaps she'd go up to poor Jenny, and try and keep them quiet."

She was crossing the common, but a wave of Mr. Tilney's stick brought her to them.

"True misfortune has come on us, Miss Ada," said Mr. Norbury. "You can guess, and won't ask me to go into details. Would you mind going up to poor Jenny and the children, and talking to them and soothing them, as you know how to do? We are in a sad way, Heaven knows. But still your sweet voice will do something. It comforts me even now to look at you."

"She will go, my poor friend," said Mr. Tilney, "and be glad to do it."

She did understand perfectly, and the holy light and deep sympathy written in her soft eyes made her face like one of the soft faces at the corbels of the cathedral.

"Dear Mr. Norbury," she said, "things will turn out better than you expect. The darkest hour is the one before day. Keep up, and hope, and we shall think of something."

"That's just what I was saying," said Mr. Tilney.

But a sort of hope came into the canon's face as he looked after her, which did not come when Mr. Tilney made the remark.

For a long time she sat with the unhappy family, listening to their griefs and lamentations, gave them the same counsel as she had done to the husband, and went away leaving comfort behind her. She got home, ran to her room, and, though usually plain in her dress, dressed herself in her best and most attractive way, with flowers, even, and set off softly. The sisters above, in their rooms, with a chaos of dresses all out on the floor, choosing, cutting, tearing, saw her from their windows, and were filled with curiosity.

"What can she be at?" they said spitefully. "Do you know, I shouldn't be surprised if she was after that young Whitaker. Just what she would do; try her demure sitting-in-the-corner tricks on him. If she does it on the dinner-day, I declare I'll get mamma to pack her out of the room at once."

Ada had no such unholy or ungenerous purpose in her head. She tripped across the Close softly, and made straight for the old substantial high-roofed building, which, within a wall, and watched over by tall gloomy trees (the curacies of innumerable rooks), was the deanery.

Mrs. Ridley had been talking to him the night before about what she called "the Norbury scandal," and expressed her wishes very strongly. She was to be of the next party to Truncheon, fixed for the following Christmas. "We must really oblige Sir Thomas in some way," she said. "They are so nice to us." And that morning the imperious lawyer doctor had been with him. "My dear dean, it can't be overlooked any longer. It's a crying scandal. We must root the fellow out. I wonder that you yourself, now, a man of piety and all that, don't see it."

"Of course," said the dean, "it is very bad. But my heart bleeds for the poor wretch, who has no real vice in him, you know. Then, Topham, think of the children."

"Well, it's quite for you and the chapter. If you're content, I am. Only I give you fair warning, you may be hauled into a spiritual court before you can look about you." By working on this view, he gradually brought the dean round, who, with a sigh, said he supposed it must be done, but that it was a hard case for the unfortunate creature.

Mr. Dean, tall, smooth-headed, neatly black, placid, was in his study, and at his study-table. The morning papers were about the room, an old room with long narrow windows that ran to the ground, and were crossed with innumerable small divisions, and through which was a view of a sort of Queen Anne's garden, and of the trees where the curate rooks lived, and picked up a subsistence much less scanty than their brethren below. He had just begun a letter to the Sir Thomas or Sir William, who was such a friend of his. He had got so far as this:

"Deanery House, Thursday.

"My Dear Sir Thomas,—Owing to some very gross scandals, which I have hitherto not been able to reach, I have been compelled to require the resignation of one of my canons here. Hitherto he has successfully set me at defiance. But I have just discovered such convincing proofs of his behaviour, that I can delay no longer. When I was last at your house, I was greatly pleased with one of your sons, a youth, as it appeared to me, of exceedingly modest and engaging manners. Let me, my dear Sir Thomas, show my esteem for you, by——"

At this point a servant entered. "A lady, Sir, to see you."

"A lady," said the dean, looking up. "Who? What lady?"

"Miss Millwood, I think she said, Sir."

The dean waved her off with his pen. ("One of that Tilney set!" was passing through his mind.) "Oh! I am engaged—quite impossible."

"She was very pressing, Sir, and I think she has some business."

Ada's soft voice was heard behind. "Dear Mr. Dean, if you would spare me five minutes. Forgive me for intruding on you."

The effect of Ada's appearance had wrought upon the servant, and it now wrought upon the dean.

"Oh, of course, Miss Millwood. Glad to see you. Come in. Sit down. Busy, you see. Letters, letters, letters. One can't be dean and shirk duty. Indeed it comes to be *all* duty. Well, now," said Mr. Dean, leaning back with half-closed eyes, and neatly putting his fingers together and taking them away again—"now, what can we do for you? Come."

Then she began. He was in a high-backed, old-fashioned chair, that seemed all made of knobs strung like beads. He was buried in it. The room was gloomy, and it seemed like a Cattermole picture—a Mediæval Bishop about to hear a Confession. The pictures of past deans—from Clutterbuck, S.T.P., "Dec hujus Cath. Nat. 1697—ob. 1784," to the dean's predecessor, "Hugh Forsyth, S.T.P."—looked down on them. But as she touched the name of Norbury, the smooth, limpid smile passed from his face, and his fingers came together and parted, and came together again, and his eyes settled obliquely on Clutterbuck, S.T.P. It was hard to resist that penitent. He was a kind, courteous dignitary, and had mixed in good society. But "My dear Sir Thomas" was on the table there before him—a stern reminder.

"My dear child," he said, "it is wholly out of the question. Not to be thought of for a moment. I am only a trustee—a trustee here." And his fingers played carelessly with "My dear Sir Thomas." Yet how she pleaded! How she sued, in the most musical of voices and piteous of expressions! How she put forward the hopeless, helpless wife, and the crowd of children, may be conceived. The dean was really a humane man, and was a little distressed at the picture. "What can we do?" he asked, remonstratively. "The man has brought it on himself. He has long been a scandal to the place—a drinking, billiard-playing fellow. No, indeed, no, Miss Ada; I am a trustee here." (And Sir Thomas, too, had his eye upon him.)

Rarely had she to ask and be refused. But here she was to fail. Suddenly a figure appeared at the many-paned windows—a tall figure with a large pink face, and large grey moustaches. It tapped musically on the panes, and tried to raise the window.

"God bless me," said the dean, looking round. "Colonel Whitaker come to call on me. I think, Miss Millwood, you may find the ladies up stairs. Very sorry, but must refuse you." The colonel had got the window open, and had stepped into the room.

"Running away, who's that? Miss Millwood, isn't it? Come back at once."

"You know Miss Millwood?" said the dean, in the same surprise.

"To be sure. I know every pretty girl on the earth. (I shouldn't

like Mrs. Whitaker to know of that speech. Mum.) Well, and how is Tilney, and all that? He looks a little down, I think." The dean did not know of the acquaintance between the great Colonel Whitaker of the Horse Guards and Miss Millwood.

"And now," said Colonel Whitaker, sitting down, "I should just like to know—to put one question—what is the business on which I find a young lady closeted in this way with an eminent dignitary of the Church, in the prime of life, and very fair indeed as to his appearance?" The dean smiled and passed his hand fondly down his black stocking, as if *that* part of him was in the prime of life too, and deserved some praise. Something like an inspiration darted into her head.

"Shall I tell, Mr. Dean?" she said, summoning smiles and even coquetry to her aid. "Oh yes, you must let me, and allow Colonel Whitaker to decide between us. Do. I won't begin without your leave though, Mr. Dean."

"Which he won't refuse," said the colonel. "Let **me** hear it—let me be judge-advocate. By the way, I hear there **is a** poor devil of a singing fellow with a wife and a string of children to be drummed out of the garrison?"

"That was it!" said Ada, eagerly. "The very thing, **Colonel** Whitaker. The dean does not know what to do. Between duty and what he owes to the Church, and sympathy and his own kind heart, I can fancy the struggle. And it is not fair to ask him. But still, Colonel Whitaker, that poor sick woman, and all the little children!"

The dean blushed a little as his eye fell upon "My dear Sir Thomas."

"Come," said Colonel Whitaker; "to be sure! He must do any thing that you—or I—ask him. Hallo!"

The door opened softly, and one of the canons put in his head, but withdrew it hastily, and with signs of terror.

"What is this?" said the dean, angrily. "Mr. Dumferline, come back here, Sir. What is your business here, Sir? Who showed you up?"

"It was only—I came to say—as I thought the matter urgent. But you are engaged," said the alarmed Dumferline.

"What is it? Speak out," said the dean testily. "As you have said so much——"

"It was only old Dr. Sterne, Sir," said the canon. "He was much worse last night; and the doctor said that he could not last *very* long——"

"You are early in the field, Mr. Dumferline," said the dean, sarcastically.

"No, indeed, Sir. I was at his bedside, and he said if you could spare him a few minutes later in the day, it would be a comfo.. and——"

"Oh, of course," said the dean; "quite so. Later. In a moment. And is that your business? Of course, whatever is usual and proper will be done. That will do. You may go."

Here was a new element. Ada, with the light of the angels from the cathedral in her face, seized on it. "Oh, then you will at least wait, Mr. Dean"—and her hands went up suppliantly, by a sort of instinct—"a few days only—to see how this may turn out."

"The very thing!" cried the colonel enthusiastically. "How old is this old canon?"

"Eighty-four or five," said the dean.

"Then there you have the whole programme. Oblige me, as a favour, now. Spare this poor vagabond with the child and wives—I mean, with the wife and tail of children. You will? I see it in your face."

The dean hesitated. He was really a good-hearted man, and thought with pity of the luckless Norbury and his family. But then there was the truculent Topham, and, worse again, Mrs. Ridley.

"Well," he said at last, "as you say, there can be no harm in waiting. We must find some way to reconcile both duties. In the words of Holy—I mean William Shakespeare—'Mercy droppeth like the gentle dew.' And so we will not issue immediate execution against this fellow for his wife and children's sake. But you must pray for his speedy reformation, Miss Ada. Yes, you must indeed."

"God bless you, dean," said the colonel warmly. "You've a good heart"

In this way was a respite obtained for the Norbury family. What jubilee there was in the small house of the Norburys when this joyful news was brought to them by the golden-haired girl, may be well conceived. Among the children of all ages who fully comprehended what had occurred, it produced a kind of tumult, and wild cries and joyous sounds of all kinds filled the air. The face of Mr. Norbury, who was even now without his coat, was suffused with a silent gratitude, and the pale face of his wife was laid close to his as she whispered: "Oh, Joey, Joey, won't you—won't you take care in future, for all our sakes?"

Mr. Tilney, too, was seriously delighted, for he had been in genuine trouble for his friend. He had gone about mournfully the whole day in lonely places, saying to himself: "Awful! awful! What on earth is to become of them? My! my! my! so it's come to this. What a world! In the midst of life, here we go!" And in very great distress he wandered about most of the day. When he heard of the reprieve, he was, strange to say, affected with more gloom instead of joy, a feeling which was inflamed by the behaviour of Mrs. Tilney, who improved the occasion, as if it were a text, saying, "There! Everyone but us! It's long before we'd get t' Sugh a difficulty of that sort. You're ready enough to help anyone else, but not where we're concerned," &c.

When the torrent had spent itself, and Mrs. Tilney had "flounced" out of the room, he strode a few paces about dismally enough, looked out of the window, made a faint attempt at whistling, and sank down dismally into a chair. "From one thing to another, one to another," he said. "Well, I suppose an end will come one of these days."

A soft voice was at his ear, a soft breath was on his cheek. The soft voice whispered comfort. "Cheer up, dearest uncle," it said; "all will be well, yet. Think of those poor Norburys, how they kept up." And yet this was really practical comfort, and there was truth in this. "He is only angry," she went on, "and does not mean anything serious. You have so many friends, too——"

A light came into his face. "Good child," he said, "you have wonderful sense—wonderful; and I declare I admire you for the way you managed the dean yesterday. I couldn't have done it. I declare to Heaven I couldn't, though I know enough of the ways of courts and palaces, and the cloud-capt what-d'ye-call-'ems. I know what you mean, Ada. Good friends, after all, are the mammon of iniquity. My poor head is so confused in these times, I don't know how to think of anything. I wonder would Tillotson do anything for us."

"Mr. Tillotson," she repeated. "Oh no, I did not think of him."

"My God! to look to the time when it was 'Tilney, give me your arm'—and a Royal Dook's arm—when any tailor or clerk would run and prostrate themselves before us in the dust. I vow to Heaven, yes; and to think what I am come to now! I am persecuted with these duns. Yes, dear," he added with sudden alacrity, "I see the whole plan. You shall write a line to your friend Tillotson. You were a pet of his. He doesn't care for an old fellow like me."

"I, uncle?" she said excitedly. "No, no, not to be thought of. I dare not ask him."

"Daren't ask him," repeated he, surprised. "Ah, coy, I see. I could hardly do it, dear. In fact, it is not so long since I had a—er—communication with him. It wouldn't do, you know."

"Oh, uncle!" she said with deep reproach, "surely you have not——"

"One can't help these things, you know. No. Go to your little desk, my dear, and write one of your pretty notes. Tell him, in fact, how we stand altogether; that we are worried, and that the whole thing is getting into confusion. As well tell all as tell little. Anything from *you* he will attend to."

"That is just the reason, uncle," she said sadly; then added firmly, "No, it is not to be thought of. If you have already trespassed on Mr. Tillotson's kindness, it is enough; and as for *my* doing anything in the matter, it is wholly out of the question."

"Ah, I see," said he bitterly. "Very well. You only do wh-

all the world is doing. The Norburys are welcome to what you can do for them; but where poor old battered Tilney is concerned ——No matter. I am very sick at heart, and this will do you as well for a beginning as anything else."

She ran to him in a second, and now got his hand in both of hers. "Dear, dear uncle, who have done so much for me, I would do anything for you but this one thing. You see, yourself, it is impossible. If I could tell you everything, you would see how impossible it is. Pity me, but don't ask me."

The poor old courtier looked into her face kindly. "I know it, I know it," he said. "But done so much for you! Dear, dear, don't say that. It is very, very little. And if you knew——"

"If you would let me show what I feel to you, dear uncle," she went on. "Surely there's that wretched little pittance of mine, to whom could it be of such use at this time? Where could it be put to such profit? And if——"

Mr. Tilney gave a sort of groan, and turned towards the window. "My dear child, that little pittance, as you call it—I have long wanted to tell you——"

With infinite tact and delicacy she saw what was the confession he was about to make. The pang she felt was not of grief after what she had lost, but because she had nothing to offer now. "Or if," she said, "*we* have been obliged to use that little resource already—and indeed it must have gone a very small way—we must devise some other scheme. Cheer up, dear uncle. Only don't—will you?—ask me to do this about Mr. Tillotson. I will tell you the reason one day."

Unspeakably relieved at this view of what had long been wearily laying on his mind, he could only murmur, "You're an angel of a girl." But still he did not dismiss the notion for deliverance that had now suggested itself, and sat down to write a long note to Mr. Tillotson. That letter was sent, but it was never read by Mr. Tillotson, who was then almost hopelessly ill, and was never answered.

When our Mr. Tilney had taken any step to free himself from a difficulty, no matter how unpromising it looked, he became at once relieved and cheerful, as though it had already succeeded perfectly—always provided he had a little "breathing time" allowed him, as he called it. So now he went busily to work on his high festival, mapping out his dinner again and again. Once, indeed, already "the girls" had gone up to tea to the Whitaker's, had met the young Whitakers, and, it was announced, had made a very favourable impression. But Ada Millwood had gone with them, as was indeed almost insisted upon by Colonel Whitaker; and it was more than likely that she, too, had attracted the stranger youth. "The girls," however, accepted his attentions. As for themselves, they brought home golden-coloured accounts, and altogether everything

seemed to be proceeding with the happiest auspices. He himself had indeed been a little alarmed by a remark of Colonel Whitaker's, viz. as to Mrs. Whitaker being a "very high woman, and, my dear fellow, would faint if she got within wind of anyone that was in debt or difficulties. And between you and me, Tilney, as to a fellow that can't pay his way, and is at peddling shifts to keep his nose above water, doing dirty tricks, and struggling to keep going, you know —I don't think she is *very* far wrong. All that soiling one's fingers with bills and renewals, and that sort of thing. It's so infernal low; and there was poor Bob Cowes, they said—but I wouldn't believe it —was tapped on the shoulder by a bailiff when he came to see us, poor devil. She *wouldn't* speak to him—had the place scented with rose-water, to take off the plague, as she said. And she's never let him in since." "Dick Tilney" laughed very heartily at this picture.

It came on very close to the day of his feast. The number of guests had increased; he had even asked Dr. Topham, who, though not pleased with him latterly, on account of his intimacy with the Norburys, had graciously overlooked the past, on account of the favour with which he was regarded by the Whitakers. He had also asked a country magnate, with an "honourable" hanging on the shoulder of his name, like an epaulette. The feast began to be talked of, to Mr. Tilney's alarm; but, with a feeling like desperation, he determined to go through with it.

The night itself would redeem all—would pay for all. The youth had been marked down for slaughter; was not to leave the room alive; that is, unpledged. Everyone in the house girded himself or herself up for this last cast. Mr. Tilney had faint hopes even that something would turn up before, and he especially relied on his "letter to Tillotson;" but day after day went by, and no answer came—a week, ten days, a fortnight even.

"I was mistaken in that man," he said bitterly; "as indeed I have been in everybody I have met. I took him by the hand when he came here; set him on his legs. Look at the result! Bank firmly established and flourishing, money pouring in—and this is my return!"

However, difficulties and dangers seemed to have lulled. Within these few days, it was long after recollected that the duns had ceased from troubling, and the weary debtor had found a temporary repose. He had contrived to provide for everything, happily through an ingenious suggestion of his guest. He was complaining to the colonel of the poor quality of things they got in the provincial corner—wine, fish, and the like.

"My goodness," said his friend, "I tell you what. Let me give you a note to my people in London. The very thing, and nothing they would like better. A man like you, with a trained taste and palate, and at the head of a bank, with lots of money, is

just the thing for them. Do. There's my fish fellow, and my wine fellow; and Jacocks, my butcher, who, I solemnly declare to you—and it's no exaggeration—gives me the finest meat in the United Kingdom. Such flavour! Just get a saddle from him as a trial, and see if it doesn't melt into juice under your teeth."

Was there ever such a Providence? For long Mr. Tilney had been thinking with awe and trembling of the outraged Waterman, his private purveyor, now actually grown passive and silent from the sheer helplessness of importunity. He had left him for the last few weeks, not daring to approach him, and hoping that some interposition—which, however, would be all but miraculous—would come and save him. Here it had come. Nothing could be more suitable. With apparent reluctance, and, as it were, doing a favour to his friend, he with silent gratitude sent orders to the tradesmen for wine, prime meat, and fish, the whole to be carefully packed and sent down by midday train. The order was executed with alacrity, and especially "a noble turbot," as it was described by Mr. Tilney with admiration, came in a basket by itself, of the shape of itself, and lay at the station an object of speculation, the night before Mr. Tilney's party.

Now it came to pass that Mr. Waterman had been to a market in a neighbouring town, had missed some good "beasts," and was coming home in rather an ill-humour. He had to wait a moment in the parcel-office to get some of his own property, and, while he waited, noticed the turbot-shaped basket and other hampers. From a mere curiosity of idleness he looked at the labels. They were, "— Tilney, Esq.," "— Tilney, Esq.," "— Tilney, Esq."

"Indeed," he said.

This direction was written. In printed letters, however, was,

FROM GEO. JACOCKS,

Victualler to

H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE

AND THE COURT.

The wine, too, attracted him. He had heard, as everybody had heard, of the coming feast; but the "beasts" and the fair had prevented his attending to it.

"Very good," said Mr. Waterman, flaming like one of his own primest joints. "*Very* good indeed."

Ah, the wine and fish might have passed by, but getting *his* line of food from a London establishment—that was the unpardonable sin.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. TILNEY'S LAST STAKE.

THE morning had come. It was a busy day. The "noble turbot" was lying in state by himself out in an improvised ice-house. The "saddle," in truth, equally noble—yet someway not so recommended by outward personal beauty—was "hanging" in a thorough draft. What mysteries were going on all morning, and all noon, and all evening, up in the ladies' rooms, from the time that the cathedral clock struck seven!

Below, Mr. Tilney was very busy, and in surprising spirits. He had said that if they could "get on" to that day he would be "all safe." The faithful Ada helped him quietly but effectively. "Flowers, flowers, my dear child; as many flowers as you can get. Flowers give the true style. I declare this brings me back to the old days again. That was my strength, you know. They all said it. His Royal Highness the Dook used to say himself, no man could design a dinner better than that fellow Tilney—his very words, my dear. Still, I don't know," said Tilney, with a sort of wistfulness, "is it the sort of life, after all, a man to be *designing* dinners and hanging about courts all day long? Perhaps if they had put me to the Bar, or into the Church, it might have been better,—it might indeed."

She soothed him in this despondency. "You have done very well, dear uncle. All will do very well yet. We must only all keep up our spirits."

The old equerry had been well trained in the arts of social foraging, and with wonderful skill could "manage" where the whole country would seem to be—for him, at least—quite barren. And already in the little parlour—which, with its windows open, and its green Venetian blinds all down, seemed a little cool hermitage—was the round table "laid"—a snowy "ronde point," bright, dazzling, glittering with crystal (to some of the glass he had given a final polish in an amateur fashion), and with a perfect "bosquet" of choice flowers in the centre.

"My dear boy," he had said to many a young man, "it is not so simple to give a dinner as you think; but it is a simplicity you only find out after years of study. Some go on their silver; some, like the marquis over there, on their gold plate. I don't like to have my knife and fork squeaking and scraping on metal. No, no; a few flowers and some decent china, and a lady's touch, and you have all that's wanted."

Here certainly *was* all that was wanted. There was champagne

below, in ice, with its sisters, sherry and claret; and there was a small but choice dinner getting ready.

Thus that afternoon passed by. It got on to the evening, when the sun had gone down and the blinds were drawn; for they were to dine by daylight, as it was to be a charming summer's evening. The window, too, looked out across the cool common to the great yellow rock of the cathedral, which, by the time the sun was setting in rich effulgence about the middle of the descent, would have its tower glowing and steeped in a ruby flame like red-hot glass; by which time, too, Mr. Tilney—sitting up stiff in a clean starched neckerchief, and a dark blue coat with gilt buttons,—we may be sure, would have pointed to the "noble pile that so picturesquely lifted its 'all head," &c., &c., and perhaps have alluded with pathetic longing to the little corner he had marked out there for his final "going to bed in." For he would by that time be back to his old self again.

Now it came to pass that about four o'clock of this day Mr. Waterman had received, by the midday post, an account of the embarrassment, if not failure, of a large provisioning house in a neighbouring town with which he had had considerable transactions. This disturbed his temper—always inflamed by the peculiar nature of trade in which he was engaged—and, after relieving his vexation by venting some of it on Mrs. Waterman, he went out hastily to see his lawyer, who lived up in the Close. As he was passing up in this direction, he saw a pastrycook's boy with a large tray upon his head covered with delicacies, and, above all, with an extinguisher-shaped Italian cake, which nodded solemnly as its bearer walked along and sang.

"Some of those fat canons," said Mr. Waterman, who was a Dissenter. "They think more of feasting their bodies than of looking after other people's souls." And, stopping at the turn to see at which of the "fat canons'" the boy left his delicacies, "it's Boxer," he thought, "or Wilcox. No. By——" he added, as the boy gaily turned into the green gate.

There were trees in the way, and he got behind one of these, and he saw the door cautiously open, and Mr. Tilney, in a dressing-gown, take them in himself. Then he drew near, very cautiously, and peeped in. The window was open, and disclosed an interior of surprising freshness and coolness. There was almost an air of ice and of shade, as if this was a tropical country. Mr. Tilney had carefully kept the blinds down all day. Out of the shade Mr. Waterman could see the rich colours of the flowers—the green and the crimson—the cloth that all but glistened, the glass that sparkled. Perhaps it was the inviting nature of the whole sight that inflamed Mr. Waterman. Losses of late—that "miss" of the prime beasts at the fair, purchased by a rival at an enormous advantage—the loss about which he was now going to his attorney—above all, the detection of the unhappy baskets at the railway (always considered

in the trade a sneaking and unworthy device)—set him in the worst possible humour.

"So *that's* it! I'll not be put on by an old swindling jockey of that sort. I'm a poor man, and not to be paying for his high feeds." And when he had done his business with his lawyer, he asked for a certain bill of sale over certain property, furniture, &c., which had been given to him as a security.

"As pretty a little table as was ever laid out," said the unconscious Mr. Tilney, standing at the door in great admiration. "A touch does it—a light, trained hand, Ada, dear. Just look! Now, isn't it time to get ready, good child? Somehow I have not found you out before so much as I ought, but now I will try and know you better; it isn't too late yet. Go and make yourself as beautiful as ever you can. Why shouldn't you have *your* chance? And indeed," he added, reflectively, "with that lovely hair of yours——"

She went up gaily, as she was told, and dressed in white, as was her usual habit. She was not long, and was, as might be expected, down the first. The three—mother and two daughters—had begun with the morning, and were even now terribly pressed for time. Their feet were heard pattering overhead, and the bed-room doors were clapped to like minute-guns.

Ada was below, flitting about softly, busy with some final matters. She passed from the parlour to the drawing-room, thought of something that had been forgotten, and passed in again. As she opened the door to cross the hall on the last of these little missions, she became conscious of dark shadows, as if the door had been shut, and started back as she found that two rough, ungainly men, with sticks, were standing there. She had never known, never seen, never read of even, the marks and tokens of the calling which these men pursued; yet, as she looked at their almost theatrically-countryman-air, her heart grew cold within her, and it was in a faint trembling voice that she asked them whom they wanted.

They were dazzled by her snowy dress, her brilliant face, and answered, with as much confusion as they were ever subject to, that it was Mr. Tilney they wanted, and would she get him down.

"What *can* you want with him?" said she. "Oh, go away, do! Not to-night; come again in the morning—do!"

They shook their heads.

"That couldn't be, Miss," they said. "We *must* have him, according to orders."

Trembling, almost fainting, she caught at the banister and stared at these dreadful ministers. Ministers—one in a white coat, another with a dash of vermilion at his neck. In these country districts they keep up the traditional costume. She stood looking at them, afraid to move, to speak. They were smoothing down their hair uncomfortably. Suddenly a head and chest were put over the stairs. Mr. Tilney—poor old courtier! often he had said he had been

"hunted like a hare;" but the end of the hunt was now at hand—had got as far as his waistcoat and high white neckcloth, when he heard the voices. He hastily slipped into the blue coat with the gilt buttons, and hurried down.

"Is that the ice?" he said, over the stairs. "Should have been here before;" then began to come down. As he turned the corner, he came in view of the group, and he stopped, stiff and rigid—more rigid than the white neckerchief he wore. That fatal costume told him the story at once. "What's this?" he said, in a thick choking voice. "What do you want?"

They made a step forward. She ran to him, and put her arms upon his shoulders and her face to his.

"Oh, don't mind," she said, for with terror she saw his stiffening eyes—"don't take it to heart; it will all be well again."

"Hush!" he said, in the same thick tone, and coming down slowly and with difficulty. "Go away to your room. Leave me to talk with these gentlemen. Good, kind child," he added, pressing her hand, "go."

As he turned to enter the room, his feet seemed to give way, and he slid down quite gently on the ground. She thought he had tripped and fallen; but the rigid eye and the unconscious expression told what had happened. One of the men stooped down to loose that stiff white neckerchief tied but a few minutes before, and with a half-suppressed cry Ada fell on her knees beside him.

At the sound—and, indeed, that curious hum of confusion had mounted up stairs, and caused some speculation in the bed-rooms—the women came out on the stairs. Augusta, with a shawl about her, was half down, and the shrill sharp voice of Mrs. Tilney pierced down to her, desiring to know "what was the matter?" No one heeded her, though she reiterated the same shrewish cry to her daughters, and at last came herself.

A scene of horrible tragedy in that little hall. They were all on their knees about the prostrate Mr. Tilney. Some one had gone wildly for a doctor. The long Quixote figure seemed longer and thinner as it lay out there, the ruddy Roman nose had turned pale, and there was a gathering of foam on his lips. The dreadful men stood by, looking on, and one of them said dolefully, with a shake of the head, that "it were a stroke."

Already were the dean and the dean's brother up in their bed-rooms in the deanery, getting ready, putting on aprons and white ties; so was it with the Whitakers, the elder of whom was busy, not putting on a tie, but coiling a sort of white boa round his throat. And while the dean was waiting in the drawing-room, word came how Mr. Tilney had been suddenly taken ill, and how the little party had, with great regret, to be put off.

We may conceive what an evening it was for *them*, behind the green Venetian blinds of the open windows The snowy round

table and bright polished glass were there, just as he had left them the cool finger-glasses ranged on the sideboard; and the flowers. Up stairs, Mr. Tilney was lying on his back suffering bleedings and scorchings, and the customary violences to force back life into him. The local doctor was busy with his work; the stricken women stood round and watched; but during this visit Mrs. Tilney had the old sagacity to hurry away the men in the dreadfully significant dress below somewhere. And they, with no sensitiveness, but with perfect good humour, complied with her wishes.

In all these horrors which had come on so suddenly, the golden-haired girl alone had preserved her calmness and presence of mind. It was she who, when they were all standing stupefied or shrieking about the poor stricken Quixote on his back in the hall, had fluttered away across the common to fetch the doctor; it was she who had thought of the guests who would pour in presently, and had sent to turn them off; and it was she who, when they were round the poor equerry's bed, watching the doctor at the scorching, and blistering, and cooling (some of the ice for the feast was laid at the back of his head), had lain over at the window looking out on the tranquil evening, with her hand resting on her golden hair, thinking painfully; and who finally, when the doctor had uttered some words of hope, had stolen up stairs, hurriedly paced up and down the room with her hands to her face, deeply thinking, and then with a sudden start had come to a resolution.

She hurriedly put a few things into a bag, called a faithful maid into her confidence, ran to a little store where she kept her slender hoard, hurried on her bonnet and shawl, and stole down again. She called to the more sensible of the two sisters, and told her her secret. She was out of the house in a moment, taking the confidential maid with her. She hurried, half running, along the Close, up the street, looking at the clocks she met now and again, and at last, by five minutes to six, panting and exhausted, was entering the railway station. She stole in furtively, and with good reason furtively, for there was another train coming in, and canons and others who had been away on journeys to stations about six and ten miles away, were returning home. That train started at eight o'clock, and would be in town at half-past ten or close upon eleven. A minor canon passing her close thought he knew the figure; but he was in a hurry to get home to his tea, and passed on. Her veil was thick, and she was lucky enough to get into a carriage where there was a husband with his wife and family, who had come a long way from beyond St. Alans. Then her weary journey began.

Fast as the express went, her very heart seemed to shoot out yet faster, with eagerness, and then to sink and collapse with a hopeless impatience which would be unendurable, and utterly overwhelm her before the end of those two weary long hours and a half. The dull burr of the train flying past was in her ears. The husband had

covered up his shining head with a handkerchief, and swung to and fro with infinite regularity as he slept; a stout wife lay back in the corner; but the little child, enjoying the whole thing, made beds and affected going to bed and going to sleep with elaborate preparation. Gradually, however, the real heaviness of sleep came upon the little eyes, and then Ada was the only wakeful one there. It seemed ages. A dull aching had come into her heart. That blue chamber seemed to be peopled with those horrid spectres she had left behind in the hall of their house. Suddenly the train grew slower, and yet slower still; finally stopped, but at no station; and she heard the distant clink of hammering afar off up at the engine, and the voice of a far-off guard, flitting along with a lantern, told a passenger there was something wrong with the engine.

It took half an hour to tinker up, and then they went on again. At about eleven the lights were getting more frequent, flashing past in numbers as the engine, getting as it were into the avenue, was bounding forward screaming to make up for lost time. And here was London, the bright white station, and the flood of light, and the porters running, and the long files of cabs waiting.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MARRIAGE.

THAT was the very eve of Mr. Tillotson's marriage. A busy day had ended for the young girl, but a very happy one. The sad, sober face of the elder Miss Diamond had softened with pleasure, and she had been very busy too. It had been settled that, at first, there was to be no "foreign parts," nor lengthened travel, but a short trip down to a quiet Welsh corner, within easy reach of London. Then, when the dreaded winter drew on, and if that little cough—which had held fast to the young girl ever since the night of her expedition—did not sensibly abate, they were to set out for some sheltered place at Nice or Mentone. That night he was almost calmly happy. Mr. Bowater had congratulated him in a way of his own. "Most sensible thing of you, Tillotson," he said. "Tell you the truth, did not think you had it in you."

Captain Diamond had come out with some marvellous presents to the young bride, which, considering even the full pay of the Royal Veteran Battalion, seemed incomprehensible. He had given his official presents, as it were; watch and chain, bracelets, ear-rings. Stepping confidently into a great Bond-street house crowded with

ladies, he had been a little bewildered at first; and a kind of shopman exquisite, reading off his shovel hat and satin stock into something that required only a "one-and-sixpenny" business, had, with a sort of abstracted pity, said something about trying lower down. "Afraid we can't do anything for you here!"

The Captain took fire. "You're confoundedly impudent, Sir, and don't know your place. I'll bring you to book, Sir. Where's the head of this establishment? Send him here."

A grave gentleman, like a cabinet minister, had heard a portion of this little scene, and, with a look that cowed his subordinate, made many quiet apologies to the Captain, who was presently quite confused with the help he received and the attentions with which he was loaded. Would he like one of their gentlemen to wait on him in the morning at his residence, and—as the sense seemed to run to the Captain—who would carry up bodily the whole contents of the shop?

"Egad, I was quite ashamed, my dear," he said afterwards, describing the scene; "and they had all the airs and bearing of gentlemen. I expected to hear something about a glass of wine next."

These civilities were, however, well repaid by the handsome purchases which the Captain made.

Mr. Tillotson, late that night when the two ladies had gone up to bed, came to consult the Captain on some sudden little difficulty. He found him just lighting his pipe. He always took "a few whiffs" before going to bed; but looked very guilty.

"I do this very little," he said, "so as not to make the room smell. I like going to bed with the taste of it in my mouth. We were talking of you not an hour ago. Little Alice—curious little baggage she is—putting all sorts of questions to me. She has taken it into her head that there is a mystery—like a playhouse thing, you know—over your early life. I laughed at the little woman. But she says she knows, and is so sure she knows, that she is determined to find it out."

Mr. Tillotson's face darkened a little, and he was silent a moment. "My dear friend," he said, "you are a man of the world, and know how much happiness depends on trifles. As a favour, I beg you—even implore you—to ask your niece not to think of these things. It will only fret and worry me, and I should not like to visit any of *that* on her. You would wish to keep it all for myself, would you not? Oblige me in this. Say it to her to-morrow morning—gently, you know."

"God bless me! yes, the first thing," said the Captain. "I never thought—that is, it is my fault (*she* meant it for fun, I know). But Tom will be putting his old heel in it. Well, well. She thought there was some little bit of a secret."

"Don't—now don't, my dear Captain," said the other, almost imploringly.

"I *beg* your pardon, my dear fellow. Well, Martha?"

"There's a woman—or a lady, she says—below, wants Mr. Tillotson. She's followed him from his place."

"Followed me here! Who? What is she?"

"Ye must ask her all those questions yourself, Sir," said Martha, showing her dislike of him in every tone.

"Go down to her, my dear fellow," said the Captain, eagerly; "or bring her up here, and see her comfortably in this room. I'll bundle away to bed."

Mr. Tillotson did not hear him. "A young lady, did you say?"

"I can't say, indeed," said Martha. "Looks youngish."

"Good God!" said Mr. Tillotson, in great agitation. "What does all this mean? I'll go down to her. You stay here."

"Yes, Sir, *you*'d better stay here," said Martha, grimly and with meaning, to Captain Diamond.

Mr. Tillotson hurried down. He knew that figure, although veiled and muffled. The light of the hall-lamp glinted on the golden hair. He forgot the grim Martha on the stairs, or the possibility of other ears listening, but ran to her and cried, amazed—confounded,

"Oh, Miss Millwood, you here!"

Ada began in a moment, and rushed into her story in a hurried voice. "We are in dreadful grief. A horrid blow has come upon him—money—ah! you will understand. They have seized on our house. Poor, poor uncle—I left him behind lying half insensible. No one to turn to. I thought of you. Will you be generous enough to forget what is past, and let me——"

"This is too much joy," he said, in a transport, and hardly knowing what he was saying. "What *shall* we do? What *would* you have me do? Speak!" (All the while the grim Martha listening.)

"If you could spare a few hours and come with me——"

"I am ready," he said, eagerly. "For hours, days, if you will. Let us see about the train. Where——"

"Oh, I know," she said, hurriedly. "I asked that. There is one in half an hour. But how could I be so selfish?"

"Selfish!" he said. "It is real pleasure to me. You have done me a favour—your uncle has. Alas! I am not skilful to do much for him, but everything else shall be set right. Depend upon me. You shall be happy. We shall all be happy. No! I forget!" And he stopped suddenly in the midst of all his preparation. "Ah! why didn't *you* come to me before?"

"It is not too late," she said, in agony.

"Not for you—no. But for me. Yes, yes—I have always been too late. No matter; let us go now."

Wondering at these mysterious words, she turned to go.

"A moment," he said; and rushed up stairs, where he passed the grim Martha, and met the Captain limping out with a face of wonder. "I must go," he said, hurriedly; "friends in deep distress. But I

shall be back in time—plenty of time. Say something to *them* and explain."

"What!" said the Captain, gravely, "going away with a young lady?"

"I cannot help it," said the other, passionately. "I tell you I will explain it all to you in the morning. I *must* go. I really must."

He hurried down. Martha Malcolm let him pass without a word. Outside he found the maid that had come with Ada. They drove away with speed to the railway station, for it was now close upon the stroke of twelve, and the return train set off at that hour.

She hardly spoke when at the station. There were very few passengers, and as they walked up the platform their feet echoed as in a vast illuminated wilderness. The three got into a carriage, and it presently set off.

He had a hundred things to say to her which he could not say, for her maid was with them; and, indeed, he now felt that it must be simply a stern sense of duty, and no more, that must lead him all through the work of this night. She, too, was not inclined to say much, thinking of the scene to which she was fast hurrying. As they drew nearer and nearer, he felt the sudden surprise which had led him into this step pass away, and the late feeling of injury to which he had trained himself return. "I am at least useful in a difficulty," he thought bitterly, and looked over at her. The dull lamp played on the hair, as golden as it was of old; the eyes were as devotional, but more restless; yet the eternal softness, the old Angelico picture, was there still. He grew ashamed of himself.

Towards three o'clock they arrived at the station, that was fast asleep, or at least nodding, with no cabs near, and only a single porter. The moon was out as they walked away from it into the silent sleeping cathedral town, where the dean and all the canons were fast locked in slumber; the dean dreaming that he had been promised the next bishopric by a courteous gentleman with a star; the canons dreaming sweetly that they were deans. Here was the little Close, a sheet of moonlight, and the grand cathedral, which poor Mr. Tilney had found such a favourite text. And there was the small house, with a light or two in the window.

"There it is," she whispered, and he felt her arm tremble on his. "Oh, my poor friend!"

He gave her comfort. In another minute they had stolen into the house, and passed by the open door of the parlour, where were the flowers for the dinner-table, and the glittering glass set out, as they had been by the now stiff fingers of the poor old equerry.

Though Mr. Tillotson felt that Mr. Tilney himself was the first object, there was one he thought of before that. When with soft eyes she came to him and said, "Will you come to him now?" he

said as quietly, "In one moment;" and went away to find those who, while they stayed, were almost a contagion in the house. A couple of minutes, and those dreadful familiars were sauntering quietly away across the Close. From the window she saw their figures clear and sharp in the moonlight, and the terrible scarlet of the muffler well revealed. Everything was so bright that they looked like clumsy pilgrims in a clear starry painting.

She shrank away, and flew down joyfully to him. The tenderness, the delicacy of this act, went to her heart; and as she met him at the foot of the stairs she could have bent down and kissed his hands.

"Now we can breathe freely," he said. "Let us go and see about poor Mr. Tilney. They tell me he is better."

They entered softly. Already all the fiery remedies had been put in force—the blisterings, and savage burnings, and what not—and with good effect. The miserable women, still in portions of their finery, were gathered about him, waiting for some result. Just as Mr. Tillotson and Ada entered the room consciousness was returning, and it must be said they were not wholly such worldlings as not to forget every other dismal association in the house, and think only of the unhappy parent that was before them. The doctor was giving them hope, much pleased at the result of his desperate assaults with fire and steel, when their eyes fell on Mr. Tillotson. With the quickness of women they knew in a second that he stood there for aid, protection, comfort, and salvation, and from Mrs. Tilney's lips escaped a cry of joy.

The train that was to take him back to town went at five. There was but little time to spare. Down in the parlour, with the grey of morning stealing in through the diamond panes, and mixing curiously with the faint light of the evening's wax candles, taken from the dinner-table, he talked with her for some time alone. She had brought him in there and softly closed the door.

"What am I to say," she said—"what am I to do? Oh, good, noble and generous," she went on in a sort of sad monotone, "I shall never forget this night! If you would let me go down on my knees before you—if there was any way in the wide world by which I could show, and by which I could atone—but now, indeed, my eyes are opened, and I see what I foolishly ought to have seen before."

The little clock in the hall struck half-past four. He started. "What do you mean?" he said hurriedly. "What am I to understand?"

"I am unworthy," she went on as hurriedly—"I feel it now—utterly unworthy of one like you. I feel myself insignificant near *you*. I feel ashamed to think how I could ever have——"

"Hush! he said gently; you will only awaken an old dream, which I have long struggled to forget, and which now—ah yes!

must be forgotten." He put his hand to his forehead. "I have been in a dream all this night. I must go now, and hear no more."

"One moment," she said. "It is only right that this should come from me. If you should again think me worthy of what you proposed that last night—if you should, I say, I should not answer as I did then, but only think myself proud and happy to spend my life with one who is so generous and noble."

He had gone to the door, and came back slowly. "*What!*" he said, hastily, "what is this? You are promised to him."

"No, no, no," she answered. "Never! never!"

"Oh then," he said, with a sort of wail of agony, "I see now. This also has come too late. *Too late!*"

"Too late!" she said, in wonder.

"There has been some fatal mistake. Why did you not tell me? They told me you were to marry him. And I—good God!—I am to marry another this very morning." The little clock now struck the quarter. "There!" he said, starting, "I must hurry to the place. She saved me from death. She thinks she loves me. I had come to think that you only despised, or at most pitied me. No, no. I must go. I dare not draw back. Honour—everything—it would kill her."

"No, no," she said, "you must not think of that. It is as much a grief for me as for you. It is my fault, too, and I shall expiate it. But my prayers, wishes, regard, everything, goes with——"

The hand of the little clock was travelling on slowly.

"Yes, I *must* go," he said, despairingly. "What *am* I to do? They wait. And all I suffered for this." He paused a moment. "Yes, there is only one course." He took her hand, pressed his lips on it, and rushed away.

In that cold frosty morning he took a last look at the great cathedral, with which seemed associated that dream of all his past hopes and fears. He could not bring himself to look on it now. It seemed a sort of cruel, insensible, destroying monster.

At the station were the crowd of fresh, eager people who had slept well all night and were eager to begin the day—agricultural people, commercial men, travellers—but none with so heavy and despairing a heart as the pale gentleman who had been up all the night, and was hurrying back to town for "the merry marriage bells."

Raw and rueful that breaking day seemed to him as they travelled. The fresh fields, the almost joyful alacrity of the early day, the stout rustics staring from the hedges, thinking it would be soon time for breakfast—all these things jarred on him. Gradually, however, with the sense of action, the feeling of stern duty came back upon him. He grew at last calmly to face his situation, and only to look back at intervals as to a dreadful nightmare that made him shudder.

Duty, honour, everything, asserted their old claim on that fine nature.

In town by eight, he had hurried away to his rooms. There he went through some last preparations for the task that was before him, trained himself, as well as the time would allow, to a little cheerfulness, or at least to composure, tried to eat something, and then set off to see Captain Diamond.

That honest gentleman came down to him in the parlour, and closed the door with some solemnity.

"What is all this Tillotson?" he said gravely. "We have been hearing strange things."

"For mercy's sake," said Mr. Tillotson, excitedly, "not now—not now, my dear friend! I have gone through a great deal to-night. I could tell you everything, and should tell you—for I would trust you indeed before all the world—but do not ask me now. I am ready, and will carry out what I shall undertake to-day with all faith and sincerity, and even love, at all risks—even that of life itself! There! And let me swear this to you, Captain Diamond. It will give me strength for the struggle. But you know me to be a man of honour."

To Captain Diamond there was something wild in all this. Still he had such true faith in his friend that his brow cleared at once, and he said not a word.

"I know you, Tillotson," he said, squeezing his hand, "and can understand a little, and admire you for this all the time."

The grim Martha, though, flitted past him with a deadly and suspicious look. Then he went away. The Captain, with radiant face, and splendid in a new coat specially ordered for the occasion, came to his elder niece in the drawing-room.

"He is a noble fellow," he said; "true as steel. I declare to Heaven we can't come near him, or even understand him. She'll be a happy girl indeed. Not a word, ye see, to her. Ah! there's my pet herself."

And there she was, like a fairy queen out of a pantomime, as airy and light and fragile as the lace and flowers which floated about her, and with a joy and brightness that transcended any joy or radiance cast by footlights in her face. She knew nothing of the troubled night the others had spent.

Now the hour was at hand, and the carriage waiting. It was time. With pride the Captain led down his treasure.

"He is a noble fellow," he said to her. "Even something I have heard to-day of him. You will be very happy, my child."

"Ah, the little secret! He has told you that——"

"No, no," said Uncle Diamond, gravely; "something else, and not nearly so trifling."

"Then I shall make it out myself. It will be an amusement," she said gaily.

"Hush! my child," said the Captain, looking round in alarm. "On no account—not by any means. Take old Tom's advice. Keep the closet door shut, my pet, and start on a new life."

"But Martha says I ought to know, and——"

"Martha says more than her prayers, dear. Ah! here's the church." And the Captain settled his flowers and moved up the curls of his wig.

Then the old ceremony was repeated in a not very cheerful church, which, from all the oak partitioning, had the air of a large banqueting-hall; and at a very highly-polished balustrade that shut in the clergyman carefully, the ceremony was "performed impressively," as every ceremony of the sort luckily is, and Mr. Tillotson was married. There were no graven images about the place—not so much as a patch of glowing stained glass which could have furnished a sacred picture or memorial. (The church was, in fact, decaying fast). But Mr. Tillotson's eyes were lifted up to the roof, where they seemed to seek the direction of something that was holy, and he repeated his declaration with fervent lips that, with help from above, he would never let his soul stray back to the past, and do his utmost, even if the struggle cost him his life, to be loyal in heart, soul, mind, and truth, to the young maiden who now stood beside him as his wife.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST DOUBTS.

Now the air clears, and the skies brighten marvellously, and the earth rolls away up and down into deep green rich folds, into sheltered valley and sunny hill, into a quiet corner of the island, where the clatter of the workshop is not heard, and where the tall chimney does not rise, and red inflammation of the factories has not broken out.

In short, to that corner of valleys round which the sheet of placid silver creeps, where there are the tranquil straits, and the lacework bridge is carelessly cast across, and seems to unite two rich and flowery bosquets, and to where the wooded banks steal down to the water's edge, and where the old Ferry Hotel, now glorified into modern magnificence, "entreats" the guest who would be quiet and retired.

For from this spot the town and the screaming train—that only shows itself a second in the open air at the station, and then runs burrowing into the mountains—is very far away; and the town-worn stranger, and, above all, the newly-married, steal down quietly to this retreat, where only few curious eyes can follow. At the old Ferry Hotel had been staying the pale gentleman and the girlish wife who had been known in the books as "Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson."

Those in the house had remarked the grave gentleman's eager solicitude and affection for the little girl who was so happy and affectionate. There were not ten years between them. Still, she looked "absurdly" childish, said some of the unmarried ladies, to be the wife of that grave-looking man.

They went through the invariable programme—the driving, the boating, the walking, the exploring—and seemed always very cheerful and very happy. When he was alone the pale gentle-

man's face grew abstracted, and sad, and weary, and the unmarried ladies looked at him with the interest that always waited on him, and said, what seemed to be always destined to be said of him, "There must be some strange mystery associated with his early life."

Every day the omnibus went down and came up, taking away guests and bringing fresh ones, until at last the season began to draw to an end. Then the company dropped away, and Mr. Tillotson and his girlish wife had fixed the morrow for departure. Nobly, more than amply, had he kept to the undertaking he had made in the old church, when his eyes wandered up to the bald cobwebbed roof. And not for a moment had his purpose faltered. It was only this morning that she had told him "what a *de*lightful time they had spent."

Still the old wound was there, the old spectre was behind the curtain, and he had only to look in that direction, and it would step forth and seize on him.

A few mornings before their departure for town, Mr. Tillotson, at breakfast, was turning over the letters that had come in, when he said, "Ah, there is your suit coming on. It is set down for appeal."

"Oh! and I hope we shall win," said she gaily. "The nasty, odious plaintiff. I shall never forgive him for putting me to all that trouble and anxiety. For, oh," she said reflectively, "you cannot imagine how it lay on my heart, and how I worried myself with it. I used to think of it night and day, even lie awake whole nights. And even when I *did* sleep, I was dreaming of it. But *now*, somehow," she said, smoothing her hair pensively, "I don't think of it nearly so much. Isn't it odd?"

And she went away in great spirits to take a little walk in the garden, to make herself strong, which she was very anxious to do. Yet somehow she did not get strong so fast as Sir Duncan Dennison would have wished. The cough lay in ambuscade, and burst out, of cold days, with great insubordination. Still the soft air of the place —did not one of the hotel-keepers of the place call it "The Malaga of Wales?"—would eventually be of benefit.

That night Mr. Tillotson was slowly pacing the garden and walks about the Ferry Hotel. It was on a green slope, and the walks went down actually to the water's edge, where the pleasure boats lay moored at a little pier. He wandered round to the front of the house, where were the little bow-windows, diamond-paned, and with old wooden sashes, precisely as they were in the old-fashioned days of the Ferry, a hundred and fifty years before. The bow-windows were surrounded with ivy and creeping plants, and now a red curtain being drawn, and there being light in the old-fashioned bar behind the red curtain, it looked as glowing and comfortable as a real Maypole Inn taken out of fiction. Most comforting, too, it must have looked to the people in the omnibus, which Mr. Tillotson

now saw coming down the avenue. He waited to see it draw up and the guests arrive, a proceeding of interest to many resident guests of the place, who stood about smoking their after-dinner cigars. It was a full omnibus, and many got down. Mr. Tillotson watched it mechanically and without much interest; but, as he stood, was attracted by a loud and angry voice giving orders about some of his "things," which could not be found at once. The voice was arrogant, and with a sense of injury in it. It complained and abused at the same time. He made such a noise that the landlady herself came out.

"Always the way at these infernal places," he went on. "You knock things about as if they were of iron. Much you care what becomes of them, so as you get your money out of us."

The light was on his face—a very hot one, seen under a grey hat—and Mr. Tillotson recognised Ross.

He had long since forgotten that strange letter from Ireland, and, in fact, was glad to see him; for he always looked on him as more wild than vicious, and now thought this meeting very fortunate. He went up to him.

"Mr. Ross," he began.

"Why, who the devil!" said the other, starting back, and shading his eyes for a good view. "So this is you, is it, Mr. Tillotson? Ah! there it is, stupids. If there's a single thing damaged in it, I'll make the Hotel pay, by Heavens I will. So you're here, Mr. T.—eh?"

"I am glad we have met," said Mr. Tillotson, "as I have something particular to say to you."

"Oh, you have, have you?" said the other suspiciously. "Well, I can't hear it now. I suppose you'll let a fellow dine—eh, Mr. T.? A man that has been half over Ireland, and across from Kingstown, must be hungry. I suppose your particular business will let me eat—eh?"

After his dinner, then, he went out into the little garden under the window to have his cigar. He found Mr. Tillotson there.

"Here you are again," he said. "Now look here," he went on. "What game are you at now? why did you follow me here, sneaking after me in this way? Why——"

"Do listen to me," said Mr. Tillotson, "and dismiss all these delusions. I did not follow you here, as you will see if you reflect. I have been here for weeks. But I am very glad to have met you."

The other laughed. "That's very good," he said. "How would you like to meet me down at St. Alans—at old Tilney's—eh? Not so much, I think. I say," he said, changing his tone, "I hope you have given up that infernal sneaking game down there—if you haven't, by——"

"Stop," said Mr. Tillotson calmly: "this way of speaking has no effect on me, not in the least. A little quiet reasoning would have

much more. I have seen too much of the world to care for threats or menaces."

This tone sobered Mr. Ross a little.

"Never mind," he said; "you always hated me, you know you did, and still do, and try to interfere with me in every way. But never mind—wait until I get my money next week. The judges must give it to me."

"That is just what I wanted to speak to you about," said Mr. Tillotson, eagerly. "Why go on with this matter at all? She is quite willing to come to some arrangement with you. Her condition is changed now—she does not care for law. It will be the most sensible course for all parties."

Strange to say, Mr. Ross listened to this proposal with more toleration. Mr. Tillotson had got him on his weak side when he said,

"I have always had your interest at heart, though I never could get you to believe it. You have some unreasonable hatred to me; for what I cannot make out."

"Unreasonable, of course," said the other, grumbling. "Ah, that's very well. What took you down to St. Alans—eh? Unless——"

"I have done with St. Alans for ever," said Mr. Tillotson hastily, "and with all that are in it. But think this all over. Begin by believing that I am not such a deadly enemy as you would suppose, and then see how this suit may be adjusted."

Mr. Tillotson told Mrs. Tillotson that night that he thought it was all settled. In the morning he came down to the garden a little before breakfast. He was walking there absently, when Ross came towards him, having leaped out of the coffee-room window which opened on the ground.

"Well, have you thought over the matter?" he said.

The other was in one of his furies. "I have, I have. You're a nice person to trust—a nice jockey. Lucky I know how to keep my eyes open. Infernally, scoundrelly taken in."

"What is this now?" said Mr. Tillotson.

"What is this now? Why, that I have found out your game. And it is close and clever enough. But I am up to you. I found you out. So you wished to make up the suit for *her*. *You* had no interest in it. No. Luckily I just asked the waiter last night."

"Surely you must have known," said Mr. Tillotson, beginning to understand him, "that I was married."

"That's very well now, Mr. Tillotson. If you put your eyes on sticks, I'll not settle—not for one sixpence."

A little figure came tripping round the corner, and bounded up to Mr. Tillotson. Ross started back, and kept scowling at her.

"So this is the defendant, eh?" he said, scoffingly indeed. "My name is Ross," he cried—"'Ross and Davis.' I only found out by

accident, last night, that you were married to this Tillotson here. *He* didn't tell me, for reasons of his own."

"It is hopeless," said Mr. Tillotson, calmly; "this is always your resource—secret insinuation. I give it up."

The young wife was looking with wonder from one to the other. She could not understand this scene.

"Secret insinuation," he said, contemptuously. "I shall insinuate what I like. But this, I give you open warning, Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson both, and *Mr.* Tillotson particularly—don't be sending to me in any huggermuggering way to settle or arrange. I'll do neither, if I were to go to a gaol, and rot, and die there."

Her eyes opened. "I never sent any one to you," she said.

"Well, then, he came himself last night—indeed it's more likely. He's very clever, our friend here, as you'll find out, Mrs. T. And he had very nearly taken me in. And so he is married to the defendant in the great action. I dare say he thinks it a good speculation. But it's the worst thing that could have happened to *you*, Mrs. Tillotson; for I might have come to terms with *you*, before they send me to Gib., and I am getting rather tired, but with *him* I'll fight to the end."

"You have a bad crooked soul, I am afraid, Ross," said Mr. Tillotson, quite calmly; "nothing will teach you."

"And after all I heard," said Ross, bursting into a sudden fury, as some recollection came to him, "of his sneaking down to St. Alans in the night to see that girl, sent for by a telegram, forsooth! So you've not done with those tricks yet, married as you are? Take care, take care, Tillotson; I'll have to give you a lesson, and, by Heavens, I may come back from Gibraltar and shoot you—I would——"

"What *does* he mean?" said the young wife, looking at her husband in terror. "What does he say about a girl at St. Alans?"

Mr. Tillotson's pale face grew paler. "Don't heed him, dear," he said. "He has some strange dislike to me. God knows I have never done any thing to deserve it—except——" and he stopped.

Ross's hand went up to his cheek instinctively. "Ah, you are thinking of *that*," he said. "How generous! how noble!"

"No, no," said the other eagerly. "I never intended—never."

"Didn't you? But I am glad it's there, very glad, Tillotson. It's a good memorandum, Tillotson. Never mind—all in good time. And when I get back from Gib., with lots of money, then, Mr. Tillotson—There's the omnibus. I'm going on up to London for the hearing. So good-bye to you, and to you, Mrs. Tillotson."

He raised his hat, and walked away. He left doubt and confusion.

"What does all this mean?" she said, timorously. "I never heard anything about this. What did you say to him last night?

Why did you not tell me? And what did he mean by the lady down at St. Alans and her telegram? Was he telling stories?"

Mr. Tillotson had often turned over in his mind whether he had not better tell out plainly the whole of this past passage in his life. But he had considered that this would worry this fragile and rather unreasoning heart, who would be sure to take hold of it wrongly. So he turned it off now, lightly. "We must not mind this man's speeches. He says everything wildly and frantically, and is indeed not accountable."

She made no answer to this, and went to her room to finish her packing; but she took all she heard away with her, thought it over and over until her head grew weary, fed herself on that dawning of suspicion, and determined, as soon as she got home, to lay it all before Martha Malcolm, of whose gloomy sense she had a high opinion.

Two hours later their trunks were on the top of the Ferry Hotel omnibus, and they were travelling away up and down the steep hills to the station. That night they were at home again; that is, at a new handsome house, which had been taken before they left, and to the appointments of which the Captain had looked with singular care.

Back in town again, in this pleasant, bright, compact house, in a street as cheerful and compact, Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson began their new life. That is to say, he was seen again at the Foncier Bank, and was commended heartily by the chairman of that great concern. A very proper step indeed, Tillotson," said Mr. Bowater. "I never was anything till I married."

Of the new establishment both Miss Diamond and grim Martha Malcolm were members. The young mistress had begged this almost as a favour, for Mr. Tillotson had old-fashioned doubts as to the policy of introducing a wife's relations. Personally, he had no objection to either of those people; in fact, was wholly indifferent. As she begged so hard, and made such a point of it, he said "Of course, yes," and with a little surprise.

The Captain remained at his old lodgings, bound under solemn penalties to come for his dinner on at least every Sunday and holiday, though, and on as many more secular festivals as might possibly arise. And it was very pleasant, about five o'clock of these days, to see him proceeding with a stiff steady limp, robed in his night cloak, and leaning on a strong red Malacca cane, which he was accustomed to call his "third leg." To these little meetings Mr. Tillotson began to look with great eagerness, for he had really come to know and admire every day more and more the thorough unselfishness and genial sympathy of this fine nature. And at these Sunday meals the Captain told the incidents of the week, drawn from his lodging life, as he enjoyed "a remarkably fine saddle," which was his favourite dish. There was a humorous simplicity in all his

relations, very entertaining, though he was accustomed to check himself very often, saying, 'Now I am getting into one of my old stories," and would have to be pressed hard to go on. After dinner, too, it was a matter of great delight with the young mistress to get "nunkey" to read out some new fiction, to which the brave old officer applied himself at once with the gallantry that always characterised him where there was a lady's wish in the case. And while the two ladies worked (Mr. Tillotson was below with business), the Captain, with his book held firmly before him, and a pair of tortoise-shell glasses on his Roman nose, read on, with extraordinary seriousness, through many pages of the most diverting of modern works of humour. For his mind was so concentrated on the one aim—that of seeing and pronouncing his words—that he was unable to spare any attention to the sense and read on steadily, as though it was his family Prayer-book. And sometimes at an exciting part, where the hero was about to put a question on which much happiness was to depend, the Captain, on hearing the clock strike ten, would take down his glasses with great satisfaction and close his book, saying, "I think now we have left them all very comfortably settled together. Really an exceedingly well written book."

All this time, however, he was watching the new ménage with much careful interest. He had been a little disturbed by the incidents of the wedding-day; but every hour's progress only pleased him the more, and made him say again and again to himself, that "that Tillotson was a prince of a fellow, a noble creature, and behaving like a true gentleman to the little girl." It had turned out, he said, the best thing in the world. But with all the Captain's observation and warm approbation, he could not see what was passing in the heart of that "little girl," now grown infinitely more serious and thoughtful than she ever was before, which, however, was to be explained by the little responsibilities of her new position. Her health had been greatly improved by the Welsh air, and there seemed no necessity indeed for that foreign journey.

The Tilneys were no longer at St. Alans. They were very much "shaken" by that dreadful blow. Mr. Tilney had, however, rallied considerably, and went about very much as he had done before, having a far deeper religious tone in his conversation, especially whenever he alluded to what he called his "illness." "The doctors ordered me away from that place, Sir," he said. "It is not the place for a gentleman with a family to reside at. Only that it suited the health of my children, I would not have stayed an hour. Cathedral is very well in its way—lifts up the mind. But, after all, take Westminster, Sir—ah! the devotional serenity of that old pile! Often and often, as I pass it by in a Hansom, it stirs me—it stirs me *here.*"

The fact was, General Whitaker and others of his friends, a little shocked at what had taken place, had come together, and said to

each other that "something must be done for that poor old Tilney." After about six months, an old friend of his, who had long lost sight of him, and who had never said anything about "something must be done for poor old Tilney," stepped on the scene, and got him some little "berth" near London. Lord Chinnery also, a distant relation of his, but with very strong opinions on the morality of "self-help," particularly in the case of relations, had some pittance literally wrung from him. And with these aids Mr. Tilney gradually rallied into his old alacrity and his old diffuseness, and pursued his secular and religious commentary on life.

On the very first Sunday after their return, the Captain came limping up about half-an-hour before dinner, thus inaugurating the custom. Mr. Tillotson was out, and he found the little lady of the house waiting in the drawing-room. He noticed a sort of anxious look in her face.

"Well, how are you?" he said, gaily. "That's right; give me the hand. Good child. Where's Tillotson?"

She was very glad to see him.

"He has not come in from his walk. He likes these long solitary walks. I suppose he wishes to have full opportunity for thinking over——"

"Over *you*, you mean," said the Captain, pinching her cheek. "You rogue."

The little lady's eyes wandered round the room anxiously.

"Not at all," she said. Then laughed. "Ah, nunkey, I found it out. I always told you, remember, he had a mystery, and you wouldn't tell me. But I made it out for myself."

Much troubled, the Captain looked at her to see what she meant. One more skilled in the little trickeries and shifts of a sensitive breast would have seen under this false acting. He was a little sorry. As he always thought, "Best let bygones be bygones."

"And there was no mystery, after all," he said. "Why, did Tillotson take you into confidence? Or, I dare say, you little rogue, you coaxed it all out of him?"

"Yes, yes," she said, "I found it out. About that Miss Tilney, you know, down at St. Alans—eh?"

This she said so wistfully, and with such an eager inquiry written so *painfully* on her face, that the Captain saw in a second what was the true state of the case. "I could have bit my tongue off," he said to himself afterwards. "But Tom always was a regular old Gamahoe"—the Captain had picked up this odd word in some Irish regiment and was fond of it—"and always will be one." He saw that this little woman knew nothing of the business.

"What Tilney," he said, "my dear? What has he to do with them?"

"Ah!" she said, excitedly, "you must tell me more now, uncle.

I will know. What is this about this Miss Tilney? It was not right to conceal it from me."

"I declare to Heaven," said the Captain, fervently, "as I hope to be saved hereafter, I don't know what you're talking of, my dear."

"Oh, you are deceiving me, uncle, and it's not fair, indeed it's not; and I suspected it all along, and you should have told me, you should indeed."

"Ah, you foolish little pet, listen to me. Will you attend to me? As I am alive, and if there was a Bible convenient I'd take an affidavit on it, somebody has been deceiving you. He's had nothing to do with any Tilneys at all. May I drop down on this rug if it's not the truth. Now believe me, my child, somebody's been funning —that's it."

"But what did he mean—a Mr. Ross, that we met—when he said that he'd come down by a telegram and saved one of these Miss Tilneys?"

"God knows. But I know this much; if you only saw those Tilney girls, as I did the other day—regular grenadiers—'gad, I'd be ashamed of them as grenadiers—of young women. So now, put it out of your little head, and don't be worrying yourself, and take the colour out of your cheeks. Ah! here he is himself."

The Captain was so fervent and earnest in this disclaimer, that he all but convinced the little lady.

So, during dinner, she had got up her spirits again. But in her room that night, where she was attended on by the stern Martha, she took up the confidences almost where they had then left off.

"Ah," she said, "Martha, you were a little wrong in what you said. I have found it all out from the Captain."

Martha at first did not understand. Then she said:

"Ah, the Captain—a good-natured and a well-meaning gentleman."

"So he is, Martha, and one of the kindest friends I have."

"So he is, so he is," said the other, gloomily. "And a pity it always is when we can't stay content with those that knows and likes us, instead of wanting new ones. Of course the Captain likes you, and wouldn't like you to be troubled."

"But he would tell the truth, Martha, wouldn't he?"

"Of course, Miss, what he knew, he would."

"Well, then, Martha, he vowed before heaven and earth, and asked me even for a Bible to take his oath upon, that all this little story about a Miss Tilney was absurd. So you must have been mistaken, and some one must have misled you."

"Maybe so, maybe so," said she, grimly. "So we'll let it be. If others are content, I am. I only do my duty to the family that reared me, and was kind to me. I haven't married into a new family, Miss, and ain't obliged to take to the Tillotsons."

"I know that, Martha; but what do you think? *Do* tell me Set my mind at rest. I sha'n't sleep to-night, I know I sha'n't. Do not be cruel, Martha."

"Well, Miss, we'll see—we'll see—in the morning."

It is evident from this little dialogue in what a cloud of troubled suspicion the young mistress of the new house was living. Mr. Tillotson, with a weight of his own in his breast, was growing accustomed to his new life, and more and more absorbed in business. He was very kind to her—"gave her every indulgence," said his friends—but had not time to study or understand the suspicions and doubts of the little lady. He used to ask her at times, plainly, had she any little grief to complain of, and beg of her to confide it to him; but on this subject she was always cold, and reserved, and aggrieved. So, a little wearied, he gave it up, and went more and more to his business as to the best distraction in the world.

CHAPTER II.

THE COURT OF APPEAL.

THE case of "Ross and Davis," from the St. Alans Assizes, had been on the list of argument, and its turn had now come round. The judges were in—the Chief Justice (Bagshawe), the Lord Chief Baron (Ryder), Barons Ridley and Mossop, Justices Bond, Woodcock, Cox, &c. They sat in a long row, in their robes, like the Roman Conscript Fathers waiting for the Gauls in the Capitol. The counsel were "in" also, dabbling among their papers, the great unemployed waiting behind, cutting the benches, occasionally whispering, and thus learning the great profession to which they belonged. Before the case began, there was a good deal of light gossip on mundane points of interest.

The court then "sat," and Mr. Bagstock, rising, began to "open the exceptions" to their "l'dships," in a low, dreamy, and almost confidential manner.

On the future day the court met to give judgment, "polishing off a lot of cases together," as an irreverent barrister said. The court was, however, divided on the question. One judge had been at the pains of "making up" the whole case for himself. Some of the others were absent, not having heard the whole argument, but the Chief Justice, who held that Bidder, a class fellow of his own at college, was bound up with the constitutional law of the country, gave his judgment last, and for "the respondent, Ross." By a narrow majority of two the appeal was dismissed. Still, this did not

finally dispose of the matter, for, as the Chief Justice remarked, the appellant could still take his case to a yet higher court, where it would no doubt receive all the consideration it merited at the hands of that high tribunal; and where, if there was anything faulty in their decision, it would no doubt be set right. Then, with an air of relief, each judge put away the papers in the now defunct case, and the crier called a new one very lustily.

During the days between argument and judgment, little Mrs. Tillotson had been observed to grow very anxious and troubled, and the curious wistful look in her face intensified. Mr. Tillotson, who every day was finding himself more and more incapable of understanding or following her curious moods, was grieved to see this, as he always understood that she was perfectly indifferent to the result of the suit. Now she was almost pettishly anxious. But he could give her no comfort. The faithful Captain saw this also, and was greatly mystified by it. But he was not at a loss for comfort. "Why, the other side hasn't a leg to stand on, my dear. A very experienced counsel that I know told me so. I know I wish I was as sure of my salvation. I wonder," added the Captain, wistfully, "if they would let us manage things in the sensible way they do in France? I am afraid you can *hardly* go to the judge and offer any thing of *that* kind" (his hand was on the steel purse). "Hardly, I think. He's too tip-top. But I know, when I and Colonel Cameron went over to Paris after the peace, we got into some foolish 'footy' row" (another favourite word of the Captain's), and knocked down a tradesman fellow, and were taken up and brought before a Shoes de Pay. And, egad, a very nice Frenchman, that took us about and dined with us—as gentlemanly a young fellow as ever stepped—put me up to it; and faith, we both went together and called on the Shoes de Pay, quite a nobleman, my dear, and before we went he took three napoleons of mine, and wasn't the least offended. Wasn't it odd? No, we could hardly do that to the judge."

It has been mentioned that she was of an excitable and spasmodic turn of mind, taking hold of new things, and especially of matters which were likely to be withheld from her, with an eagerness proportioned to the denial. She began to fret and chafe about the decision of the court. She confounded Mr. Tillotson by saying, one evening, that it was the only thing she had to look to, for if it failed she would be a beggar.

"A beggar!" he said, in astonishment. "My dear, surely we have a sufficient fortune?"

"*Ah, you have!*" she said, with great energy.

He shook his head, and could not understand her. That very day, at their dinner, she, suddenly as it were coming to a resolution, said very nervously,

"You know those Miss Tilneys?"

He looked up.

"Yes," he said, "a little—a very little."

"A *very* little," repeated young Mrs. Tillotson, colouring, and with something like scorn. "And pray why don't you see them now? I thought you were quite intimate."

"You know," he answered, quietly, "they live far away from town. But would you like to know——"

"Ah, I dare say," said she, trembling. "It would be a nice arrangement! Suppose we asked one of these Miss Tilneys in on a visit?"

"Miss Tilneys on a visit!" he repeated, wondering; then gave a sigh. This wearied him. "Why should we do that? You would not care for them, or like them. I have never spoken ten words to them in all my life."

He said this so firmly and truthfully that she became silent, and saw that she was mistaken. She puzzled and mystified over it, and consulted with the grim Martha.

"Ah, that is what Mr. Tillotson says. Of course *he* would like to tell you everything. Why should *you* know the secrets of his life before marriage?"

"But I believe him, Martha," she said, firmly.

"Ah, of course you do," said that cold waiting-woman. "If I had only time. No matter."

She hardly slept the night before the judgment, and it was her pressing importunity and eagerness that forced Mr. Tillotson to give up business and take her down to the court. She sat there, working herself into a fever, and with her hands clasped, listening to the judges as if they were bishops and clergymen. But she could not understand or follow them, and it was long before she could see that she was the being alluded to as "the appellant," or follow the mysterious advantages or losses which fell to her side under that description. With a little pencil she checked off "her judges" and his judges. And it was with the most mournful, hopeless face in the world that she struck the balance. She never said anything, but rose to go. Mr. Tillotson pressed her arm.

"Don't lose hope, dear. We may win yet. Everything was a little against us."

As they passed out, the first person they met was Mr. Tilney, who came from the body of the court, and who seemed a little anxious to escape observation. He was the old Mr. Tilney wonderfully recruited, and with the old stick, which he had carried away from St. Alans, saltierwise across his chest.

"My dear Tillotson," he said, "and Mrs.? Am I right? Ah, yes. This is very painful, my dear Tillotson, and I am really concerned, I am indeed. And though I wish our wild friend well, naturally, you will allow, still you know what I must feel to you, Tillotson, who have stood by me shoulder to shoulder, as I may say. Goodness, goodness! when I look back! But still, our friend's

victory so far is a mere stage—a stage. It may topple over like a pack of cards. By the way, they are waiting here in the cab. Ross has run away to speak to his attorney."

"Excuse me," said Mr. Tillotson, deeply feeling for his wife. "We must go now. Another time."

"But they will want to see you, my dear friend. We *never* see you. And there—do you see your old friend, Ada Millwood, in the window? Ah, Sir, Sir! *She* will never forget that night. A noble girl, Sir, that deserves to be well settled in life."

The eyes of young Mrs. Tillotson were literally devouring the devotional face, with the heavy golden hair, set in a tiny bonnet, that was looking from the window. "Ada Millwood!" she repeated, as her breath came and went very fast.

"Yes," said Mr. Tilney; "this way. Of course she will like to know *you*, Mrs. Tillotson—a sort of curiosity, you know."

Mr. Tillotson knew not what to do. Those restless little eyes were wandering from his face to Ada's, and he became a little confused. A sudden light came into Mrs. Tillotson's eyes, and she read off the solution to what had been puzzling her for so long!

It was his first meeting with Ada since that night, and no man had ever more firmly and loyally carried out what he had proposed to himself. With this confidence in his heart, he went up straight to the cab where the Angelico face was, as it were, unworthily framed. That Angelico face brightened as he drew near. He took Mrs. Tillotson's little hand as he said, "Miss Millwood, this is my wife."

The young Mrs. Tillotson was still looking at her with restless eager eyes, almost dazzled by the sight. She only answered in some strange confused words, for her heart was beating with anxiety and anger.

Ada received her with a smile, and the very light of interest and welcome in her soft tranquil eyes. "I don't know what to say," she said; "but *indeed* I feel for you. We have been accustomed so to think of our side, and wish for his victory."

The little lady tried hard to answer coldly and with dignity that "she was very good and kind."

"But," Ada went on to Mr. Tillotson, "I have thought of something. Ross is ordered away to Gibraltar,—is going in the morning,—and, somehow, is in a softer vein. Leave it to me. He has his good points, and can be generous when he chooses. It is very miserable to go on this way, and for *her* sake."

This she spoke in a sort of semi-confidence to him. The light of the old St. Alans days and nights came into his face. He forgot the succession of events, the revolution almost, that lay between, and said, gazing into that gentle face

"Always kind and thoughtful!"

Mrs. Tillotson felt herself a poor insignificant cipher here. At

that moment the gentleman she had seen at Bangor came up hastily He was in great good humour.

"Well, Tillotson, I saw you in the court. I have beaten you again this time, and I can sail to-morrow with comfort."

Deep reproach and anger was in the eyes of the fair-haired girl.

"This is Mrs. Tillotson," she said. "Don't you see?"

He coloured a little.

"Well, perhaps I do. Oh, I beg your pardon," he added, awkwardly. "I did *not* see you. Well, you can't expect me to say I am sorry, and that sort of thing. Confound hypocrisy! But still, I wish it was some one else that was 'appellant,' as they call it."

Ada smiled.

"Ah, that is better!" she said. "We must go now. They are waiting for us. Good-bye!" she added, almost fondly, to Mrs. Tillotson. "I am so glad to have seen you; and don't be cast down. Something may come about to put all right again, and for all parties. I shall let you know," she said, "Mr. Tillotson."

They separated. Mr. Tillotson, as they went home, found himself unconsciously dreaming away back to St. Alans, to the shadow of the old cathedral, even to that Sunday when the music was playing, and he had heard Fugle sing and the dean preach.

Mrs. Tillotson, with a sort of fury tearing at her little heart, looked at him now and again with a strange inquiry. But she spoke scarcely at all, and then only very shortly. When they got home, with an effort he had finally put away far from him the luxury of that dreaming, and had frozen back to the cold material of business.

She had flown to her room. There the grim Martha came to her, with something evidently on her austere mind.

"You were asking me," she said, "about those Tilneys the other day. I think what I said was not received with pleasure—certainly not believed. Well, I have now found means to make out the whole truth."

"And so have I, so have I, Martha," said the unhappy little lady, almost sobbing. "I see it all now, and the meaning of their solemn denials. Even nunkey to deceive me! But he kept to the letter of the truth."

"And didn't I warn you?" said Martha; "do me that justice. I knew what men of that sort, gloomy and mysterious, must come to. A pity young creatures will not be said and led."

"Yes, yes, Martha," she said. "And *oh, she is so lovely, Martha, no man born could resist her.* I am like a low common creature near her."

Mr. Tillotson, for the rest of his day, got absorbed with the business world. By night, the glowing colours of that old picture had grown cold, and faded out. He had shut up the camera, and thrown wide open the shutters. The dinner went by in the old

routine. He fell into his weary toleration, for he saw there was a grievance, and, after the dinner, went back to the study and to the business.

As he sat there, towards nine o'clock he heard a cab drive up, and presently a servant came to tell him a lady wished to see him. An instinct told him who this was. Other ears, too, heard the unusual stoppage of the wheels at the door, had heard the subdued voices in the hall, and the shutting of the study door.

Presently Mr. Tillotson was in the drawing-room where his wife was sitting, the small lips compressed together, and her cheeks flushed. He entered hastily.

"She is an angel!" he said, eagerly; "she has done what she said. Come down to her and thank her."

"Who?" said she, with a trembling voice. "Who am I to thank?"

"Ada Millwood," he answered; "come. She is sitting in the study. She has been at that Ross the whole day,-pleading your cause. She has prevailed, as such an angel's temper *must* prevail always, and he has agreed, even now on the eve of his departure, to enter into some sort of compromise. He has some generous instincts after all."

She looked at him with the same restless and eager eyes. She knew that she could not find the proper words, and that she could not trust herself to speak. Suddenly she got up.

"Let us go down to her," she said, "and thank her at least."

They went down. Ada ran to her, and repeated her good news.

"There," said Mr. Tillotson, with glistening eyes, "see what good friends God has given us. To-day everything was against us, and this kind angel has changed the face of all things. All is well now."

"Hush!" said Ada, softly. "You make too much of it. You know what I owe to you! *Indeed*, I would do more if I could."

"I dare say," said the young wife, with forced coldness; "and I do thank you for your good offices, but I do not require them; I should prefer that this matter went on to the end."

"Went on to the end!" he said, in astonishment. "What *can* you mean, dear?"

"That I should wish to see it go on. I don't want to have it settled," she said, with sudden vehemence. "And, as far as *I* am concerned, never *shall* settle. Of course, if you choose to assert the power the law gives you——"

They both looked at her in astonishment.

"But you know," he said calmly, "you said you were longing that it could be arranged. That was even before it was decided. How much more now? Consider it calmly; especially after Miss Millwood has taken all this trouble."

"Did I ask her?" said Mrs. Tillotson, with a trembling; "was

it my request? *You* might have settled it with her. But, of course, arrange it as you will. I have merely said what is *my* wish. As *long as I live, I shall never agree to it.* There is"

"That is decisive," said he, calmly. "There has been some misapprehension, evidently. I am deeply grieved Miss Millwood should have had all her trouble for nothing, and it only remains for me to thank her most cordially for her goodness."

"I am sorry, too," she said, sadly. "I think it would be the best for all. But no matter now. You will forgive me, I am sure?" she said to Mrs. Tillotson.

The other answered her coldly, and turned to go, as if she could not trust herself to stay.

"You do not want me," she said, in the same voice, looking from one to the other, "any more, do you?"

The golden-haired looked at her anxiously and sorrowfully, Mr. Tillotson with wonder.

"Well," he said, "it cannot be helped. It must take its course, then."

Mrs. Tillotson, flushed and excited, said good-bye, and went up stairs again. A few moments afterwards the cab rolled away.

Then Mr. Tillotson went to his young wife, and very quietly expostulated with her. "I am sorry you did not tell me this," he said, "before: it would have saved a world of inconvenience. Of course you know what is best for your own interest, and if you would listen to me, there is yet time. Be advised. Besides, to Miss Millwood, who has been so kind and generous, it is scarcely fair, and——"

Flaming in her cheeks, flashing in her eyes, the little lady burst out: "Ah, that is it, it seems! We have given *her* trouble! That is the offence. Ah, I am beginning to know—I am beginning to see —how I have been deceived."

"Deceived!" repeated he, gravely.

"Yes, deceived; but no matter. I know why you are so anxious to settle this business, and the scheme is——I have friends still who will tell me, and find out everything for me."

"You are angry now," he said, still in the same grave tone, "and foolish. But I can make every allowance. I am sure, my poor child, you cannot mean what you say, and if you will take my advice, you will not listen to these friends, as you call them."

"Ah, I dare say," she answered, eagerly, "that would suit very well. But I shall not give everything up without a struggle. Oh, I have heard, and shall hear more still. And it was unkind and cruel, and *not fair* to conceal from me all that went on down at that place at St. Alans. I know all that! I do! I do!"

He shook his head, sadly. "If you only knew or could appreciate why it was everything was not told you! But no matter now."

"Oh, they were good reasons, no doubt," she went on. "Of

course. But I was kept in the dark purposely; yes, you know I was" (she was on the verge of sobbing now); "and about other things, too, for which, of course, you had your reasons."

Mr. Tillotson drew a deep sigh, and covered his face with his hands. "We will never understand each other, I fear." But from that night the vision of the golden-haired haunted her like a spirit, fretting her into a fever, inflaming her into little furies. From that night, too, arose the sense of what he had called a fatal mistake; and from that night, a chill and thick cloud settled down between the husband and his young wife.

CHAPTER III.

TROUBLE IN THE HOUSE.

DURING these days some gigantic financial negotiations were beginning to absorb the attention of the great society to which Mr. Tillotson belonged. Not alone was the business of the Foncier Company developing to an extraordinary degree, but other societies were springing up every day. "You looked out in the morning," said Mr. Bowater, "and there was the ground thick with 'em, like mushrooms." And there was work for all. But of these there was one started about six months after the Foncier, its most dangerous rival, managed with equal skill, and in popularity and resources just inferior by that six months exactly. This was called the General Finance, and was administered by a daring chairman, Mr. Dundee, also in parliament, and by a dashing Woods Marshall as secretary. Dundee and Woods Marshall both well knew the power of the steed they were riding, and at the proper time meant to give him his head, pass the Foncier, and win easily. Mr. Bowater and Smiles had an uneasy sense of the possibility of such a thing, and were straining every nerve. A financial fury raged between the two houses. Even Mr. Tillotson, for the moment, was drawn into the excitement of this rivalry, and as Mr. Bowater had said, again and again, that "Tillotson had a long head—as long as any of us," he was sitting late and early, morning and evening, and also at little cabinet councils called hastily at dead of night, weary and impatient at the strange little troubles, the incomprehensible clouds, that waited for him at home. There was an excitement in all this which had great interest for him, though t times he recollected himself with a sigh, and thought why it was he could feel interested in such things. But a greater and more absorbing crisis was drawing on.

There was a smaller financial society, called The London Loan and Discount, older than either of the other two, and perhaps a little old-fashioned. Both secretary and chairman were old-fashioned also, and liked what they called "steady-going business," which they certainly got. The "dashing" style of the newer companies injured them a great deal—an injury they at first met with contempt, then with affected indifference, and finally with alarm. By-and-by things grew worse—for a monetary ill-health turns to disease with surprising rapidity—and then came meetings, and consultations, and dissatisfied shareholders, and a whisper of winding up.

At the Foucier one morning during these early difficulties, which were not suspected, the secretary came into council with an extraordinary mystery. There was elation in his face. "Such news!" he said. "But to be kept dark—not a word—not a whisper! I suspected it this month past, and put Gibbs on the track. The London Loan is going to wind up. And now is our time!"

Mr. Bowater and other members of the board understood the full force of this news. The first gentleman nearly jumped from his chairman's chair. Even Mr. Tillotson was a little excited. "This *is* news," he said.

"Now is our time," went on the eager secretary. "We can strike in, and do the General Finance. But we must be cautious; not a breath—not a whisper. They will be sniffing it out, and a day's pull on them will be something."

Financial eyes kindled as the secretary laid before them details of the little plot. The London Loan was to be approached in the most delicate way—not openly or officially—and he looked at Mr. Tillotson. It was finally agreed that Mr. Tillotson, not being conspicuously in the business, should take the matter in hand. It might have been a treaty with a great country, and he an envoy receiving his credentials.

"You know you managed that Bhootan thing very nicely, Tillotson," said Mr. Bowater, complimentarily.

He was gradually, as we have mentioned, catching the spirit of excitement which pervaded the others. He went home in some elevation. There, he would have liked to have told the schemes and the little plot; but between them during dinner, over the little round table at which they sat, hung a dark cloud. On her face was the same expression of settled resentment; nothing would conciliate her. He tried again and again, until habit came, and with a sort of bitter "Ah! it was a mistake—a miserable mistake!" he came to accept the whole as part of that hopeless gloom that was to overshadow his course. And then with a sort of relief, and even a little excitement, he would withdraw himself into his study, to try and forget everything in the details of the little delicate negotiation.

On the Sunday, the Captain's figure was seen limping up at

half-past five o'clock. He made the third at the little table; and though he had no American smartness, not even sharpness, he had that surprising instinct—almost as good—which comes of unselfish interest in others. After she was gone up, he said to his friend, "My dear Tillotson, what is all this? There is something, now—you won't be angry with me—between you and our little girl."

"My dear Captain," said Mr. Tillotson, laying his hand upon his sleeve, "angry with you! or make a mystery with you! No," he added, with a sigh, "there *is* nothing beyond the old, old story, that everything I attempt turns out wrong. Poor child! 'Tis a pity for *her!*"

"For *her!*" said the Captain, with affected eagerness. "The best thing that could happen her. My dear friend, will you trust Tom—old Tom, who has seen a bit of life? This is all in the regular course. I've seen many a girl, and many a married girl; and just for the first, you know, we must let them have their little airs and ways, the creatures! And, goodness me, Tillotson, when we think of all they must go through from the post, and how gently they take everything, when some of us get out of humour if a satin stock is a little too stiff! Why, I suppose now," added the Captain, philosophically, "if she *didn't* go on a little, it would be unnatural—*quite* unnatural."

Again Mr. Tillotson put his hand on the cuff of the other. "My *dear* Captain," he said, "you are too good for us here! But I have no secrets from you. The truth is this, the whole has been a *mistake*—a *miserable mistake*. And I must resign myself to it."

An expression of painful conviction came into the Captain's face, to be replaced in a second by one of joyous alacrity. "Ah, Tillotson," he said, "my dear friend, you are not an old boy, like me; and though you could buy and sell Tom over and over again in business, still he has picked up a thing or two about the girls. God bless me! All I saw in Paris!" (And this gentle, loyal, and most upright gentleman—which, indeed, he was in all things—seemed for the moment to hint that his experience with ladies had been of a wild and desperate sort.) "Ah, the creature!" he went on, "this is only her little way of showing her love. Why, I saw Hilyar in Paris, with as elegant a woman as you ever came across, dressed just like a lady, and she went over and over again with all that, until I thought poor Hilyar would have gone mad. It's just her little way. They like just to show their pride. Why, I *know* it, Tillotson. She *dotes* on you. And why not? A fine soldier-like looking young fellow."

Mr. Tillotson smiled sadly. "Ah, that's just it!" he said. "There was the mistake. She should have had a fine soldier-like young fellow, as you describe him, and not an ancient dried-up old ledger like myself. No matter," he said, seeing the Captain's face

lengthening, "I suppose you are right, and that it will all come round in time."

On that day, while Mr. Tillotson was engrossed with his exciting business, young Mrs. Tillotson had an unexpected visitor. Mr. Tilney called and stayed in the hall while his name was sent up. It was Mr. Tilney, nearly approaching the older Tilney—the Tilney that had "rallied" ladies, and took enjoyment in life and what was going on in the world, and who was so exuberantly grateful to Providence for any little blessings that had been showered upon him. "I have had some rubs," he often said to his friends—"some rubs. But it is good for us. Those that are well chastened, we are told, are most loved. I take it to be a very fair world on the whole; I do indeed."

"Just take my card up," he said to the servant. "Mr. Tilney, you know. I almost made sure you would have had him back from business by this time."

Young Mrs. Tillotson's first impulse was to send down word that she was not at home. But she recollected the name, and what associations were connected with it; and very eagerly she sent back word that she hoped Mr. Tilney would walk up.

Mr. Tilney entered, smiling, and with lofty welcome, as if it were *his* house. "So glad," he said—"so very glad. Now this is what I call an opportunity." And he reached over a Lilliputian chair, which creaked and cracked as he laid down his long figure in it. "They make these things," he said, looking over his shoulder at it, "all for show, you know. A breath destroys 'em, as a breath can—what d'ye call 'em? They run 'em up, you see. God bless me! the days of the good old costly furniture—fine work, Ma'am. There was Darby and Minifer, who had any furniture that was wanted for the palace. And noble work it was; would support elephants."

The little lady was very excited and eager in her manner. "You recollect the day we met you at the court," she said. "I was the poor beaten appellant—is not that the word?"

"Capital, Mrs. Tillotson, and quite right. There are phrases in the profession. That wild fellow, Ross, now aboard ship, they call *him* respondent. As for the court, I am not sure exactly—query, Court of *Appellate* Jurisdiction—query, Criminal Appeal, with power to form a quorum, or add to their number. Certainly with power to form a quorum; but really——"

Mrs. Tillotson interrupted him eagerly: "And how are they all at home? Mrs. Tilney, and your daughters, and Miss—Miss——?"

"Millwood, Millwood," said he. "They are pretty well, thank you—much obliged to you. Mrs. Tilney has been suffering from the bronchitis. Miss Millwood—Ada—she never is ill, somehow. A very wonderful person altogether."

"Yes," said the little lady, very anxiously.

"Yes," said Mr. Tilney in a dreamy way, with his eyes half closed. "She's a woman, you know, that you might walk from this, say to—say to—oh, let me see!—to Lamb's Conduit-street; yes, without meeting another like her. And I do assure you, her little history might be written in a book. Romance up and down; take it in any way, romance still. Ask Tillotson!"

"Ah, to be sure," said she, her breath coming and going. "Just as you say."

"Just as I say," he repeated. "Tillotson has told it you again and again. Of course he has. Why, there's Ross; the man would put his eyes upon sticks together to get her. Romance again, up and down the middle, you see."

"Would he?" she asked, with extraordinary interest; "but why——?"

"Ah, why! You see there are wheels on top of wheels. A very remarkable girl, I assure you. I might begin now, sitting in this very chair" (which gave a loud crack, and received a look of remonstrance from the sitter), "and not be done before to-morrow, telling all that occurred in that little town. It might be put in three volumes octavo, large print, and double columns."

"Yes?" she said.

"I dare say you have many a laugh with your husband over all that. I know you have, my dear. I and the present Mrs. Tilney used to have, long ago—she rallying me upon a certain maid of honour." (It was, indeed, very long ago. Mrs. Tilney was not likely to take the trouble of rallying him now.) "I don't wonder he was struck—a man coming down in that way, and not a soul to stir him up."

"Tell me about that," she said, eagerly—"*all* about it. I am dying to know."

Mr. Tilney shook his head. "Ah, no!" he said; "no, no. Scarcely, I *think*. These were bachelor days, and it ain't fair, you know. I remember the Dook saying to me, 'When a lad marries, Tilney, he cuts the bachelor hawser adrift!' You know he was bred to the sea, and spoke in that way. The Sailor Dook he was always called."

Full of feverish anxiety to know more, with strained eyes and flushed cheeks, the little lady said again: "Oh, you must tell me." Then, becoming a little hypocritical, she added, with a confidential look, "In fact, I know it all already; that is, *nearly* all."

"Ah! I see," said Mr. Tilney, "a little fun! Want to rally him in the long evenings! I know. There was Lady Mary Jennings, who had been maid of honour, and married well——"

"And so he actually," she said, with a look of strained anxiety that would have startled any one less preoccupied with his reminiscences than Mr. Tilney, "*proposed* for her?" (Wistful eyes waited for the answer.)

"Dear me!" said Mr. Tilney, his eyes still dreamily on the top of the mirror. "How that Jennings's business all comes back to me now—the little room, and Jennings taking me by the button—dear, dear! Proposed for Ada! Oh yes! And to this hour I never knew," added Mr. Tilney, with great deliberation, "why she would not have him; Tillotson, he was very hot on it. Just rally him a little to-day as the decanter goes round."

She forced a laugh. It was surprising that one so trained in the world as he was could not see the true state of things. And yet this little lady, absorbed as she was in her great trouble, could notice the fond and longing stress he laid upon the word "decanter." "You must take something, Mr. Tilney," she said, with a sort of coquetry, "after your walk."

He put up his hands in faint protest. "No, no—not for me." (Yet it could be for no one else.)

"There, I have rung!" she said.

Absently helping himself, Mr. Tilney came back, of his own accord, to the subject. "Dear me! the hours we spent in that town. He was with us, Tillotson was, in and out every hour of the day: like a dog, I may say. Did what he liked. Came and went and nobody asked questions. Just put it to him after dinner—ha, ha! There was the old cathedral there, a noble pile, lifting its tall head and lying there. He was uncommonly fond of going with us—ha, ha! (Thank you! Now *really* no more after this *one*.) Lifts its tall head. Dear me! the peaceful innocent hours I have spent there. I always felt good, and wiser, and better."

Mr. Tilney, almost fascinated by the retrospect, was readily led on to give many particulars of those innocent days, and was greatly amused as he dwelt on what he called "this early amour of our friend." There was the cricket and the little parties. He finally rose to go in great good humour. "I have really spent a most delightful afternoon. You must look after that cough of yours. I assure you there was a young slip of a girl, daughter of Lord Rufus Hili, Captain of one of the royal yachts, literally *snipped* off like a geranium before you could——" and not finding a striking action readily, he had to put in, "look about you. I'll look in again some afternoon. We are *all* coming to town presently. We are *too* much at the back of Godspeed. We want to see our friends *more*. So good-bye—*good*-bye!"

He went his way greatly satisfied. Mrs. Tillotson sat long with her eyes on the ground, meditating. The cough did, indeed, come very often, but she did not heed it much. So the evening passed by, and the cold meeting between the wife and the husband returned from business (so full of his negotiations that he did not notice the strange look in her face and her compressed lips), and the dinner. And then the lamps were lit, and the night set in.

He was sitting, as was his custom, in his study, fretting a little

impatiently, and wishing he had never undertaken the responsibility of the negotiation. As he sat and pondered over this matter, he heard the faint cough of the little lady up stairs recurring frequently and almost at settled intervals. She was sitting as she almost always sat during the long evenings, alone. He had often begged that she would have Miss Diamond with her as a companion, but she had steadily declined. The little lady seemed to hint at a bitter grievance.

"Oh, no," she said; "it is better as it is. She would perhaps be found to come too often. Would you mind staying a moment, as I want to speak to you?"

A little wondering, he sat down, and said kindly, and with warmth, "What is it? Tell me now. This is what I like."

She coughed again in the same odd way. "I am not well," she went on. "and I do not get better. Somehow, the air of this place does not suit me. Even the doctor says that the winter that is coming on will be severe; and I assure you I do not want to make much of a trifle (and you can ask uncle, for he told him so too), but he says I ought to go to some warm climate for the winter. I feel great pains sometimes, indeed I do."

He started up. "Good Heavens! why was I not told this before? Surely you must have known that *anything* you wished would be done, and that——"

"Anything I wished! No, I did not know *that*," she said, almost scornfully.

He looked at her. "What does this mean? What wrong has been done to you? Explain it now, and have done with it for ever!"

She grew cold in a moment. "What I mean is," she said, "I want to go away. As I say, my chest is very weak indeed, and I am sure would not bear the coming winter. It is not much to ask. I would not say so, only the doctor says so. I would not, indeed."

"Of course," said he. "Why not? Your life before everything. Surely you'll do me the justice to say I would do anything you should require. Where would you wish we should go—to Nice? Just at this moment I have a serious affair on hand, but in a fortnight——"

"Oh," she said, "don't be alarmed. I shall inconvenience no one. You could not leave business. I am not so selfish as to require it. Dear Miss Diamond will come with me, and darling nunkey, if I ask him. He will be delighted, I know."

"I can go in ten days," said he, reflecting, "I am sure I can manage it."

"Then I shall stay here for the winter," she said. "I would not have the duty put on me of breaking up your business. I am sure the doctor is only an alarmist. I shall do very well, I know, and am quite strong enough."

"Just as you please," said he, with a sigh; "all I can say is, and I say so most earnestly and truthfully, I will do anything that will suit your wishes. Use me in any way you wish."

"Then I wish to go away to Mentone for the winter," she said hastily, "and to go with—with Miss Diamond and nunkey, and I don't want to interfere with your business."

"Very well," he said; "then I shall make no opposition, and help you in every way. Of course I must not stand in the way of your health. Still, perhaps, a little later I can join you."

"After your business is done?" she answered, in the same tone; "no, no, you must stay here, and have *the full benefit of my absence!*"

He looked at her again with an almost pitying expression, said not a word more, then turned hastily and left the room. That night was indeed the crisis, and ended all. She had clung to the faint hope that even now, when she spoke so plainly, he might understand all, confess, and make the handsomest amende he could, while he, thoroughly mystified, and giving up all protest as hopeless, went down silently to his task. For a few moments he was repeating to himself, "A mistake—a miserable, wretched mistake from the beginning!" Then was gradually absorbed into his old work once more.

The next time that Captain Diamond came she ran to him. "Nunkey, I want you to do something for me—for your own child. You know what the doctor said, and—and—I want you to come a long journey with me—all across France to that place."

A little start passed through the Captain's figure as he heard this proposal. He almost "winced;" but in a second his soft grey eye lighted up, and he said, with assumed enjoyment, "To be sure, my dear."

"Oh, how kind! how good! how generous!" she said. "Indeed you must *not* go! And I am very selfish to ask you, and I know you are only doing this for me."

"Ah, you little monkey," he said, patting her cheek, "go along! I suppose you think I am not young enough. 'Gad, Tom's not a bit too old to travel—not a bit! I'll be very glad to brush up my parleyvoo. Well, now, it's a long time ago. No, I will just get out my little valise, put up the rayshurs" (so our dear Captain always called those weapons); "and the curlin'-irons, and be ready to-morrow. And, egad! we'll enjoy ourselves, my dear, and not spare the rhino! Many's the little dinner we'll have at the Caffys, at the Mil Colun, and the Roshay Cougcale. Though God knows if they're going on! And we'll stroll in the Pally Roile, too, and Tom makes it a point that he's not to be interfered with in any way. I like to spend my money and travel like a gentleman. I wish I was a little younger, though, and the hip not so stiff. But we'll get along the Boolvars fast enough. And surely, my dear, there are the cabs! I

wish to God it was a fine handsome young fellow like Tillotson was going with you, and not an old *Bolshero* like myself!" (The Captain used many of these odd but expressive words.)

CHAPTER IV.

A NEW PROJECT.

More days went by. Up at the office, strange rumours had come in, some to the effect that all had been sealed and signed between the two offices.

The secretary came in with a gloomy air. Mr. Bowater was disturbed. "You meant it well, Tillotson, and it was a bold game, but it won't do in money matters; people take you at your word. It does very well for the foreign courts and the Frenchmen, and that line. And do me the justice to say I warned you."

Mr. Tillotson grew excited. "I don't believe it," he said—"not one word of it. Why will you not have some trust in me? I pledge myself to success—that is, unless I am hopelessly astray. I implore of you, as you have gone so far, leave it to me still!"

The secretary shrugged his shoulders. "The mischief is done now, I fear, so it doesn't so much matter."

"Oh, certainly—certainly," said Mr. Bowater with a resigned air.

It was a serious responsibility, and Mr. Tillotson went home more troubled still. But the result he came to was to "hold off," and play the indifferent game a little bit longer. After all, it was only human nature that this serious anxiety should dwarf domestic trouble. In the midst of a letter, with the office-boy waiting in the hall, the Captain would come in to him. His alacrity for foreign travel would be all gone. "I don't know what to say, Tillotson," he said, "but, somehow, it doesn't seem to me all right. And yet why a little girl should not go for her health to a warm place I don't see—indeed I don't—and, God knows, I'm ready at any moment."

"I'm as much puzzled as you are," said Mr. Tillotson, with a weary sigh, "and I would wish her to stay—indeed I would."

"To be sure, I know it," said the Captain, suddenly taking the couleur de rose view. "And why shouldn't she like a little change? A girl's a girl, you know, and they like fun, and I shouldn't be at all surprised but that this was one of their nice little innocent tricks—God help them—the creatures!—with which they show their liking. You must come out soon, you know; she'll be dying and pining for you the first week. I know the girls well, in my little way."

"Do you think so?" said Mr. Tillotson, absently, and a little relieved. "Well, perhaps so. And I am sure it will all come right."

Two more days went by, and the preparations for the journey went on. In the bank affair the state of suspense continued. There was trouble and pressure both outside and inside the house. Everything was undecided.

It came round at last to the morning of the departure. The little lady had been going through her preparations with a coldness and impassiveness that amounted almost to sternness. She was determined, he saw, to carry through what she had intended. Several times he had begun: "Once more I ask you, what does this mean? Any explanation—any grievance—what is your wish? Be candid: speak openly."

The answer was to this tone: "Do I complain? Do I say I have a grievance? Surely you do not object to my going away for my health? If so, of course I can show myself obedient."

But, almost as she spoke, came the winged Mercury from the office with a sort of telegram—it was written so hastily—from the secretary:

"DEAR SIR,—You beat us all in foresight. I have just heard, from a secret source, they are going to offer us terms this evening."

Something like a smile of triumph came into his face. She saw it, and with a bitter impatience hurried to her room. "He does not care if I were dead and buried this moment—as I soon shall be, *I hope!*"

Now, it came to pass in these days that the Captain, busy with his preparations, enjoying himself immensely at home of the nights, with his tools out before him and spectacles on, doing all manner of ingenious repairs to his travelling-traps—a pastime in which he delighted—had gone out to buy himself a good warm sort of horseman's cloak to keep out the night air; for he recollected that bitter cold journey up to Paris in the diligence, when ice and snow were on the ground. As he was in the shop, choosing the article in a friendly manner, and apologising to the shopman, who was, indeed, delighted to serve him ("as gentlemanly a young fellow, my dear," the Captain described him, "as you'd ask to see in a ball-room"), when he heard a voice behind him. It was Mr. Tilney, who had met him before at Mr. Tillotson's.

Mr. Tilney wondered at the large cloak, said it reminded him of "Brummel" Richards, who always drove his own mail-coach in like attire—"he died miserably, poor devil"—and the Captain explained the cloak was for a journey. Mr. Tilney was astounded when he heard who was to be the Captain's companion. "God bless me!" he said, many times, "what odd things turn up! Man never

knows, but always *is* to be, what d'ye call it—you remember the lines. But I suppose it will all come right, my dear friend! Not the smallest sparrow that tumbles from the twig does so without some kind of object." And with the old, old stick, Mr. Tilney pointed devotionally towards the direction of Providence in one of the upper ware-rooms.

The Captain was greatly impressed by this fine moral view of the order of things. "Really, my dear," he said, "the clergyman in the pulpit couldn't speak better." And, as they were not far from the Captain's lodgings, he respectfully asked Mr. Tilney to "step up." That gentleman had an instinct, even at that distance, of the Captain's *garde de vin*—"guard-her-veen," the old soldier called it. And its contents were, indeed, produced; and Mr. Tilney sat more than two hours with the Captain—and the decanter of pale sherry. "Really," said the Captain, "it quite improves one to listen to him! All the tip-top people he knows, too! Quite sorry that I am going away!" So, indeed, Mr. Tilney was, for he would have liked to have dropped in very often of a morning on the Captain.

At home, Mr. Tilney told his family of this sudden departure, which he said he could not follow at all. "As for weak chest, and that sort of thing," added Mr. Tilney, "you know *that* doesn't do at all."

However obscure this explanation might seem, there was one present who understood it perfectly.

It was now the very morning of the departure. Everything was still in indecision. No news still about the coquettish office. The Captain came up early in the morning to settle some final arrangements. He found the young lady of the house going through her task with a firm purpose. Miss Diamond, equally resolved, was in the parlour alone. The Captain entered with assumed jauntiness. "Well, we are all ready, eh? The day has come round at last, and, d'ye know, my dear, promises rather a blowy night—so Shandon, an old navy man, says. I declare, I don't see why we should put ourselves to inconvenience, you know."

"My dear nunkey, she wouldn't wait another day for the world. Her heart is set on it, and I think it is better for her—far better—that she was out of this place without delay."

"Well, health before everything," said the Captain. "To be sure so. And, indeed, I like a bit of a breeze. Many's the time I've crossed with Captain Skinner, and landed at Howth, going to Drogheda."

"My dear nunkey, I don't mean health of the body, but of the mind. It don't suit; she's pining away—losing spirits, love, happiness, life—everything."

"Nonsense!" said the Captain—"folly! I must say it. Now, if it was an old Bolshero like myself—but with a handsome young husband, well to do—Ah! the girls will always be foolish! And

now, mark my words—Tom's words—when we get her to Paris, and the theatres, and the caffys, if she's not writing over to our friend here to come and join us by next mail, say Tom's a lad, that's all. I have a scheme in my head."

She shook her head. "My dear uncle, you don't see the state of the case. Health, indeed! And so you think, dear nunkey, we are taking you this long journey for that?"

The Captain looked mystified. "For what else, then?" he asked. "My goodness, speak out!"

The little lady came running in herself to ask for something.

"Ah! there she is herself," he said. "Well, fellow-traveller! And where is the husband?"

She coloured.

"Ah! you little rogue," said the Captain. "What have I been saying, now? That we'll have him over before a week's out, and he'll be dining with us at the Roshay Congeale, and going to all the shows. Mind, I say it."

Some pleasure came into her face. "Oh, if I thought so!" she said. "But no; he would sooner far stay here, and have this house to himself. Happy days are coming now for him."

"Jealous little rogue!" said the Captain, playfully. "Maybe we wouldn't go beyond Paris after all; and 'pon my honour and credit, I don't see why we should."

At this moment a cab drove up to the door. Miss Diamond went over to the window with some curiosity. "It is a lady," she said.

With a strange instinct the young Mrs. Tillotson went nervously to the window herself. "A lady!" she repeated. "Who? What can she want?"

She looked out anxiously, and saw the lady leaving the cab; then suddenly turned to the Captain with compressed lips. "I shall go, indeed I shall, and on this very night. If you cannot come, nunkey, then I shall ask some one else."

"My goodness and credit!" said the Captain, "to be sure I'll go! Isn't the little valise packed? But, my dear, just attend to me. There's some little soreness or pique now, isn't there? I'm for the pleasure party to Paris and the little dinners at the Pally Roile. And now, my own pet, let us have in Tillotson, and settle it all before we go—eh, now?" And the Captain looked at her wistfully, and almost imploringly.

"I want no pleasure or pleasure party," she said, with icy coolness. "The doctor says that I shall die if I stay here. You heard him yourself. Of course that may seem nothing to some people; but that is all no matter now."

"My dear child," said the Captain, "of course—of course!" And he began to soothe her. "It was all Greek" to him, as he said later.

Just as he was going, the lady who had come went out to the cab. Mr. Tillotson put her in, and it drove away. He looked in—perhaps out of curiosity—stopped irresolutely when he saw there were so many, then came in, and closed the door. "I am glad," he said, "that you are all here, for one reason. I wish to speak, for the last time, about this journey. What is the necessity? There is yet time to change. If the fault is with me—and grant that it is—I am ready to do what I can to amend."

"A man can't say more than that," said the Captain. "And spoken in a manly way, too! There, I knew it would all come straight! Let *me* tell him now about the Paris pleasure trip."

"I understand it all—perfectly—too 'well,'" said young Mrs. Tillotson, with infinite bitterness. "No matter now. As far as *I* am concerned, I wish to go, for my health. Is that so great a crime? Ask your doctor what he thinks. Perhaps it may be desirable, for certain reasons, to keep *me* here during this coming bitter winter, and if so, of course I must submit. But I *wish* to go, and, if I am not prevented, shall go to-night."

A deep gloom spread gradually over the Captain's face as this speech was made. Mr. Tillotson looked at her a moment with sorrow; then, with a deep sigh, quitted the room without saying a word.

That night, as they were lighting up the lamps in the street, the Captain drove up in a cab, with the "little valise" on the box. He came in, with the new horseman's cloak about him—the collars of which stood up stiffly about his face like a garden wall—from a gate as it were, in front of which the Captain's fine Roman nose peered out. He was ready for any journey, and at almost any notice; for though he had not found the opportunities, like other men, he had the soul of a true campaigner.

Inside was an agitation and flurry, now that it had come to the point. But young Mrs. Tillotson, with compressed lips, gave no sign, but went through all her last duties of preparation with a Spartan firmness. Mr. Tillotson, nervous and agitated, would have spoken, and made one last appeal; but he knew that it was profitless. Miss Diamond alone, as she met him in the lobby, said sorrowfully, "Oh! it should not have come to this!"

The Captain alone forced an affected jollity, as if a season of extraordinary gala was coming on. "The idea of Tom's going out on his travels again! Egad! I might meet some of the old set in Paris, walking along the Boolvars! Who knows? And I can tell you, my dear, as I lay in my bed last night, I was furbishing up some of my old French, and I assure you I found it coming back to me all of a heap, as I may say. Though, between you and me and the post, I never was strong in *that* line. Egad! we're like boys going off for the holidays. Just, I may say, a week's holidays; and then we'll come back quite strong and fresh, and our little chest made

light and right by the parley-voo doctor. And egad, I don't know but I may put my own old Bolshero figure under their hands."

Thus he rattled on without ceasing; and, indeed, he did good service to that constrained party. Finally, the moment came, the cab was announced to be ready, and the trunks on. Then there was a constrained farewell between the husband and wife, the grim Martha looking on in the hall. The Captain wrung his hand warmly. "I'll take care of her, my dear boy," he said, "and write to you." And he whispered, "She'll be writin' to you to come out before a week's out, and mind you *do* come, and we'll order *such* little dinners at the old Roshay. Good-bye! Good-bye!"

As they drove away into the darkness, the grim woman left behind, and standing in the hall, said solemnly:

"And so you have let her go! You shouldn't have done it. No, no, Sir!"

He answered her gently. "She *would* go herself. God knows I did not wish it."

"Yes, *He* knows," said she, in the same tone. "There's some man waiting to see you."

It was some one from the office. The business had taken another turn. Everything was "up" now. It was drawing on to a crisis. A letter and an express from the secretary, written in a sort of rapturous hurry. "My *dear* Sir," &c. This was to be answered with all speed, and there was an answer to Mr. Tillotson within an hour, and he had to give his mind to it; and if he had had friends they would have said it was a very fortunate distraction, for he was now alone and deserted in his house, just as he had been before.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN ON HIS TRAVELS.

This bank negotiation was one of the most fitful, harassing things that could be conceived. It began to advance—to go back fitfully; one day being on the verge of conclusion, and on the morrow as far off as ever. This excitement kept Mr. Tillotson very busy in mind and body; and it was after a weary day as he sat in his room wishing that he had never embarked in the business, that a limp and rustling envelope was brought in, that had just arrived by the post. It was the communication from the travellers. He opened it a little eagerly, for he had often thought of the little lady's worn and

wistful face with bitter self-reproach. He knew her writing, and there was a tiny little note from her, cold and brief, in which she said that "they had arrived quite safe, and that she already felt better, and that they were to enjoy themselves very much," with more formality of that sort. But with it came also a long, closely-written despatch, in the rather cramped but legible hand of the Captain, which must have cost him infinite pains and time. It was dated from "Meurice's," where the Captain had put up on his last visit, when he had repaired to the capital after the peace, and was written in extraordinary spirits. Mr. Tillotson seemed to hear him talking, as he read:

"Meurice's, Vaughandredi.

"MY DEAR TILLOTSON—Here we are in this gay old city, arrived quite right and safe, and the fellow-traveller bearing the journey wonderfully. But, my God! what a place it has become! I should no more know it than the post, and I declare I hardly think they have improved! But what a *grand* place for the sights! And I can tell you we sha'n't miss one of them, so long as there is a shot in the locker and Tom to the fore. We here have what they call a fiackker by the day, and we drive to *everything*, for I don't want to be hard on the leg, and I don't want our little fellow-traveller to be droning after an old spancilled or spanchelled fellow — egad! I am forgetting the spelling—like me. I never saw such a brave little Trojan, and I can tell *you* enjoys everything. I wish to God, Tillotson, you'd just put a couple of shirts up into a hand-bag and run over for a week itself. The dinners alone are worth trying, and the people so civil and tip-top, you know.

"It's wonderful the way they do things now! We got down to the boat about eleven o'clock, and were put on board as fair and easy as you could fancy. I was going to look after the luggage down at the port, when a handsome officer-looking fellow, with a gold band, said to me not to take the trouble, as he would look after it. And so he did; and, I declare to you, I didn't know whether to offer him anything or not, for you might as easily insult a fellow of that sort as not. Faith, I begin to think I was rather shabby, but they all told me it was the regular way.

"The boat was no great things after all, and reminded me of the cabins going to Dublin in poor old Skinner's day. We were so full, too; and there was not a berth for the fellow-traveller, which was a shame. But I found out the captain—as gentlemanly and tip-top a fellow as you'd have at your table—and I went up to him on the deck, and took off my hat—for he was *in command*, you see — and told him it was very hard on us, and though in *both the Services*—the steward told me he was an old lieutenant—*we* ought to rough it, it shouldn't come on the ladies, the creatures! He then said that, for

that matter, not much was to be got out of the Services, take which you pleased; to which I agreed, and said, would he do me the honour of taking a pinch of some excellent 'high toast,' of which I was taking over a canister. Well, to make this foolish old story short, the captain said my lady was welcome to his cabin, and then we put her in, and, I can tell you, she slept all the time like a child. It was only a little hutch of a place, tied down to the deck—not a word of a lie in it—and there she was very snug! for there was a little window through which I looked now and again. A perfect gentleman as ever I met.

"Then, when we got ashore towards morning, I declare my old heart was glad to see the Frenchified look of the place, and the fishermen just the same, and the John Darms as fierce as ever, and the custom-house fellows rummaging our trunks in the old style. Egad! *they* hadn't forgot the old style either. For I picked a soft-looking fellow to give my passport and keys to, just letting a two-franc piece be mixed up with the keys, and he took off his hat, and gave the passport to a superior officer in large spectacles, who called out as if giving the word of command; 'Let Mouseer le Capitaine and his niece pass out.' I declare I blushed; for she *would* put that title into the passport, though, if the commander-in-chief heard of it, he'd call me over the coals. Then another gentlemanly fellow said, 'This way, Mouseer le Capitaine!' and opened a wicket. And egad! you should have seen us walking out, and all the fellers making way. Then *my* lad—the two-frank lad—uncommonly knowing he was—got us a cab, and said he'd have our baggage up at the hotel before us, which he hadn't though, nor for two hours after. But it was all one, for we were in no hurry.

"I wish you had seen the breakfast they gave us at the Hotel Dongletair. And we were as hungry as hunters, I can tell you. Wine, and everything tip-top, and dirt-cheap *for such a place*, and the landlord like a nobleman in his manners. Every time we met on the stairs, it was a deep bow, hats off to the ground, and 'Mouseer le Capitaine!' though I declare to you I was getting ashamed of myself for going on such false pretences. Ah! the French, Tillotson, are a fine people! They take such trouble. Then, when it came to be time for the train, we paid our bill, and went off in *style*. In the carriage up we met with a nice civil military-looking fellow, with a handsome beard and moustache, middle-aged rather, and he was so pleasant to talk to—to listen to rather; and when he got out at the station to get some refreshment, *I thought I never saw so fine a figure* of a man. Not at all unlike the Duke of York, the commander-in-chief. He lent us his English papers and his books and told us *all* his travels in Australia, America, and the North Pole. Quite a tip-top, superior man! You'd have been delighted listening to him. He had only just landed, he told us, at Havver, and—would you believe it?—was going down to Nice also! There

was good luck. But I must stop, for here I am at the foot of the page, and the fellow-traveller is to write you a long letter herself, and put this in with it. But I shall write you again in a couple of days.

"Believe me, my dear Tillotson,
"Yours to command,
"THOMAS DIAMOND,
"Lieut. Royal Vet. Battalion."

Mr. Tillotson read this letter with great delight and interest. It brought relief to his mind also. "Well, she is enjoying herself," he said, "and *will* enjoy herself yet more. She was pining to get away, I suppose. Well, it is all for the best." Then the negotiation came in, and some one had him by the button-hole, and in a corner, and his thoughts were taken far away. Thus days went by, and a week, and three weeks, and, strange to say, no letter came from abroad, and the negotiation stood still. Until suddenly one morning, as the board was sitting gloomily, and arguing the worst, Mr. Tillotson's servant came for him, and said that a gentleman was waiting in his study. It was an emissary. The coquettish office had come to surrender, to yield herself to the Foncier for better for worse, until death, or the Winding-up Act, should them part.

It was a glorious victory. There was jubilee at the Foncier. On Mr. Tillotson's head fell all the glory. It was his work, and he himself was a little elated. In a day or two, the necessary formal steps had been taken, and four of the stucco men and plasterers were busy entwining the names of the newly-wedded offices in a true-lovers' knot on the front of the building. It was now

"THE UNITED GENERAL FONCIER AND LONDON LOAN COMPANY."

The rejected office was supposed to be tearing its hair and grinding its teeth inside one of its own safes.

On one of these happy nights the servant brought in another letter to Mr. Tillotson. It had the Nice postmark. He opened it, being in good spirits, with excellent anticipation. It was from the Captain again at great length, with a few cold lines from Mrs. Tillotson.

"Maison-Maray, Nice.

"MY DEAR TILLOTSON—Here we are by the sea, in this cosy place, in uncommonly nice lodgings, and, I must say, as reasonable as ever I set foot in. We have been here only two days, and the weather is very good, and the houses fine enough *in their way;* but coming after Paris, you know! Well, even Paris, you know, didn't seem quite the same as it used to be, somehow. They were pulling the whole

place down, and, do you know, Tillotson, I missed the old lanes and the ramshackle quarters where I and Colonel Cameron used to walk, looking for a caffy to dine. But, maybe, it's old Tom himself that's changed.

"We thought a fortnight was long enough, and we saw everything—theatres, operas, and all—and, above all, the little gardens in the Chons Eleasy, where you went inside a railing and took a chair, and had your cognac, and as fine a creature as you'd ask to see came out and sang, and not a halfpenny to pay. Indeed, I never met such civil people.

"My travelling gentleman put up at our hotel, and nothing could exceed his attention and kindness to *me* especially. I used to cab it, you may be sure, but sometimes the fellow-traveller would like to walk, and see the people on the Boolvars, and I was glad enough to get his arm. I *wish* you heard him talk, Tillotson. It's as fine, every bit, as a book, and so instructive! And I was so glad for *her* sake, for, you know, it took off her thoughts, for she was always, always looking out for *you*. 'Nunkey,' she was always saying, 'd'ye think he'll come over by to-night's boat?' or, 'I wish to God, nunkey, he'd come! What on the face of the earth keeps him! I am wretched and miserable without his company, nunkey!' In fact I can't tell you *half* what she said — no, nor a quarter. I give you my honour and word this is all true, every word of it.* By the way, we saw the new opera, the first night too, the finest thing I ever heard in the whole course of my life. Drums and trumpets, and everything, and a woman with a voice that would have astonished you, all she went through! I never heard anything like the runs and quavers she did. And a very fine woman, too; though of course, there's no place like Paris for fine women.

"When we were going away and settling with Mr. Meurice himself,† as elegant-mannered a man as you'd ask to meet in Hyde Park, I found that our travelling friend was going too, which, between you and me, I was uncommonly glad of. For to hear the pa of them talk was really fine, and to hear him on the gold mines, and how he *had* to shoot the fellow—but by all accounts he was a regular scoundrel, and serve him right—who just cut the bridle of the leading horse. And he certainly might have got off scot free, and our friend within an ace of having to begin the world again from the post, when, as I say, he caught him, getting out his firelock just in time. But you should hear him tell the story himself.

"They tell me it was an uncommonly fine country all the way

* May we not suspect that this was one of our Captain's sinless falsehoods, written for the best of purposes?

† This was the manager, whom our Captain always addressed as "Mr. Meurice," but whose name was Fleury, who spoke English admirably, and had many conversations with the Captain at his glass bureau. Meurice himself, as the reader well knows, has been dead many years.

down, and you could see them making the wine, and the women, the creatures! with their backs bent double, groping and stubbling under the bushes. Between you and me, I never dozed so much in my life, for the sun was uncommon strong, and the carriages very close. But, egad! *they* had plenty of talk between them, and kept it up in fine style, till we got to the *champagne* station, as I call it, and we had half a bottle for, 'pon my word, a couple of francs, I believe. How it pays the creatures, I don't know. And, I declare, the fellow-traveller was quite in spirits, as the pair laughed and talked."

Mr. Tillotson looked off the page a moment at this passage. "I thought it would be this way," he said a little bitterly. "It was only one of the many mistakes."

"You can't imagine" (went on the Captain) "of what use he has been to us. Looked about, and got us these nice lodgings, did everything in the nicest and most gentlemanly way, and, I declare to you, Tillotson, I could hardly get him to come and take his little bit of dinner with us. I can tell you, there are all sorts of tip-top people here; and though they talk of some fine women, they're not healthy-looking, you know, the creatures! and they tell me suffering a great deal. Fellow-traveller plucking up a great deal, and enjoying it all. And really the people are so civil in *calling* and leaving their cards, that it is hard to put them off. Sir Thomas Rumbold and Laby Rumbold were here yesterday—quite the tip-top people of the place—and have asked us to a little party to-night. Egad! it was lucky I brought my dress coat and satin stock! And Sir Thomas says he recollects perfectly meeting General Shortall in Paris. He is in parliament, and quite friendly, and asked me for some of the Irish snuff. Lucky I brought a canister."

Thus the Captain prattled on for another page or two. Some one came in and interrupted Mr. Tillotson, so he could not read any more then. That evening he took it up again, and found that the next portion was written a week later. It was still on the theme of Sir Thomas Rumbold and their pleasant party, which was quite "tip top." Sir Thomas had taken in "the fellow-traveller to supper, and, indeed, they paid *me* such *attention*. Sir Thomas is quite the gentleman, and not at all the 'high-up' sort of man you would think. And our friend the traveller, I find, is everywhere, and nothing, I give you my word and credit, can exceed his kindness and attention to our little girl. All we want—*she particularly*—is to have you over here to share in what's going on. My dear fellow, try and come, if it's only for a fortnight. The doctor here is a *very* clever man, and he says her chest 'must be looked to,' but he will make her all right in a couple of months."

Then came a cold postscript from the little lady herself. Mr. Tillotson again smiled a bitter smile. "Her liberty is what she

has been pining for! Now she is free! And this dear, simple, noble heart, he trusts her!" Then the absorbing business and its details came rushing in, and swept him away with it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POOR FOOLISH LITTLE THING.

THREE weeks more went by. The Captain was still a steady correspondent. They had dined with Sir Thomas Rumbold, those "tip-top" people, and the mayor, "now as like Alderman Harty, of Cirencester, as one private ever was to another," had asked them all to a grand ball. "To which," said the Captain, "I hope we shall not go. Egad! I do indeed. The fact is, our little woman has been going out a *little too much*, and the doctor came to me the other day to say it would be as well she did not.

"Poor child! it would be hard to disappoint her, for her little heart is set upon it. And do you know, Tillotson, I think she is rather led by the travelling gentleman we picked up on the road. Nothing can be more civil and obliging, and he is always with us and most attentive. So I think if you were to write her a little lecture, you know, and tell her she must keep herself close, and take care of herself, and not go to parties, it would do a vast deal of good."

Mr. Tillotson smiled as he read this, and he did sit down and write a kind, gentle expostulation in the terms the Captain proposed, warning her against the harsh winter, and begging of her to give up those proposed balls and parties. "Of course," he said, as he sealed it, "she will think I have some aim or view in this matter. But it is a duty, nevertheless."

A fortnight passed away again. The mayor, who was so like "Alderman Harty, of Cirencester," had given his ball, and it had been long since forgotten, being more than a week old. Others had been given; for, as is well known, none are so "gay" as invalids, and Consumption goes round in the valse with Pleurisy. Some went even from the supper-room to the grave. For deaths are very sudden; and there are apparent recoveries and wonderful healthy bloom on the cheeks; but all the while life is kept in but by a thin airy net growing finer and finer every hour, which suddenly bursts at a second's notice. Still the survivors dance on, and

say that Nice is a wonderfully "restoring" place, and that they are mending every day and getting quite strong.

Again came the familiar handwriting of the Captain. But it was in a more constrained and laborious style. The sense of boyish and unbounded enjoyment had perhaps begun to wear off. The old officer was sighing for the good English life to which he had been accustomed. It might do very well for a time, perhaps. He seemed to hesitate and be embarrassed as he wrote:

"The fellow-traveller is not as well as we could wish. But she is full of spirits. The fact is, my dear Tillotson, we *had* to go to that ball; the mayor himself came the very day itself to ask us, and one couldn't well refuse, you know. It was a very rough night, and the ice an inch thick upon the ground—it made my old bones ache,—and our poor little girl *they made* her go, and when we were going away I went to get the carriage, leaving her at the door with our travelling friend, and only a thin rag of a cloak about her. I couldn't find the carriage—you know what an old Bolshero I am to send out on such a chase—and when we got home she was shivering like an aspen-leaf. I declare to God I could cut my own right hand off, Tillotson. I am a stupid blundering old fogie that ought to be put up in a hospital. It was all my fault from beginning to end, and that stupid old mayor's who forced her out; for when she got *your* letter, I *do* think she had given it all up. The doctor says it will be nothing *in the end*, 'may,' says he, 'doosemong—doosemong,' and that we must shut her up in a month or two. Which, between you and me and the post, I am not sorry for, as it will do her good. Our travelling friend calls every day, but I am rather stiff and dry to him, as I think it was a great deal *his* doing. Now, my dear fellow, do you think you could manage to get rid of the business for a time, and just take a race over here? *It would set us all right*, and put us on our legs again. Try, now.

"Don't be in the least alarmed, it is only her cough is a little strong, and keeps her awake at nights a little. For Doctor Delorney, or Delahorney—it sounds like that—is a wonderful man, and I *do* think could make a barking dog sleep.

Again came another letter from the Captain:

"The fellow-traveller is much better, my dear Tillotson; and, do you know, I think you must set me down as little less than an old woman, for all I have been writing to you. Egad! I believe I *am* getting an old woman — sometimes, at least. But the foreign doctor, Delahowney—egad! I never *can* get his name*—beats every thing. We had a doctor in our regiment, who, they said,

* About the time the Captain was at Nice there was a Doctor Delaunay enjoying much English practice.

could cure a broken walking-stick; but, my dear fellow, Delahorney beats every one of them out and out.

"Talking of out and out, why can't you come out? The fact is, I'm not equal to the work, or, my dear boy, I'm not the fellow for it. I'm ashamed really to be seen at these fine parties, an old broken-down fogie like me, stumping in on my old shank by the side of a fine fresh young woman. My dear boy, the husband is the proper man; a fine handsome fellow like yourself should be with his wife, and leave the ledgers. I wish to God you heard Doctor Delahorney on that; as good as any parson born and bred. He says he has known numbers of fine young fellows cut short in that way, and he says, for a man who has overworked himself and wants to get colour back into his cheeks, there is no place at all even to touch Nice. And I must say he did it as nicely as any lord duke, and bade me give you his compliments. And not health, my dear boy, but it's the *regular* thing; every girl here has her husband with her, and not a shambling old boy like Tom, who's but a poor makeshift after all.* And to tell you the plain honest truth, my dear fellow, the place is full of young mounseers, gentlemanly fellows enough, but as wild scamps as you ever heard of in the course of your life. Last week, a fellow called the Markey de Sasheyvous something, went off with a fine tip-top woman, a noble grenadier of a creature, and, egad! when the husband said something to him, he had him out in two hours, and shot him as dead as a rabbit. And, my dear boy, the droll thing is, all the women are dancing with him.

"Our travelling gentleman is very friendly indeed, but I think comes a little too often to the house, and, egad, don't take a hint, you know. But then our little woman seems to be amused with his company. I belong to an old generation, you know, my dear Tillotson, when the fogies had their day, so I am not up to every thing that goes on; so I suppose every thing is *all* right. But, my dear boy, the way to make every thing nice, and smooth, and tidy, and, as Doctor Delahorney says, *would put you on your two legs again*, is to come out yourself *at once*."

Mr. Tillotson saw behind all this directly. "The old mistake," he said to himself, bitterly. "Poor Captain, *he* lets out the truth at once. She is now in her element. *This* was the freedom she was pining for." Mr. Tillotson went off hurriedly to his board at once.

"You *have* been working very hard, Tillotson," said Mr. Bowater. "I hope not over-doing it. We must take care *here*,"

* The reader will see that our Captain is struggling by all sorts of circuitous routes to reach some point, which he is too delicate to make for directly.

and he tapped his forehead. "To be sure you must go. It is a little inconvenient, no doubt; but we'll work for you. Just wind up within the next two or three days, so as to leave all clear." And Mr. Tillotson set to work eagerly to get all clear, and fixed the third day from thence as the day of his departure. "Poor little soul," he said. "It seems a sad mistake, but she must not suffer for *my* folly. It is a duty for me." He sat up late that night and yet later the next night. With great labour he had nearly got through his task; and then the secretary came in with yet more, and asked, "Surely, now, did a day make so much difference? And, after all, couldn't he put on the steam when he had once started?"

At last a free man, and with a little light luggage hastily put together, he set off by night, and by a dark night; with that "putting on the steam" alluded to by Mr. Smiles, he need only be two nights on the road. Down they would swoop to Dover, as rapidly swoop across to Calais, and then "tear" wildly through the French country, and as the night gathered in its dark draperies slowly, and the morning broke, the pleasant objects of a new land, the fields, the costumes, the men and women, would gradually open on the traveller. For him it was a gloomy night, and a cold one in thought as in temperature. He took no account of the time, and it was with a little surprise that he found that they had stopped in the large blazing station at Dover, and heard that he was to descend here and go on board. He got down mechanically.

There was a great crowd and bustle. It was now found to be a wild raging night, and passengers as they stood at the door and looked out down towards the port, shrank back a little; the wind was whistling, and seemed to bring with it a flavour of the sea. Some thought it better not to "go on," and turned to the great hotel close by. Mr. Tillotson, careless about such a thing, prepared to go down straight to the port.

But another packet had just come in, bringing with it a miserable foretaste of what was in store for those who were going on the sea now. Here was the miserable, battered, cruelly-used herd of passengers staggering up, without strength or life, wet and shrivelled, but still thankful to be on land once more. Some with faces all "washed out," and ghastly with sea-sufferings, came blindly and wildly into the blazing station, and Mr. Tillotson felt a little pity for such miserable beings. And suddenly, as he was waiting to let the stream pass him by and let him out, a figure in a cloak which had a very high stiff collar, with a thin white face peering out, came limping past him, and said half to himself, half aloud, "I wonder where *this* takes us to, my dear?" For there was a lady behind him, and only *one* lady, and in that blaze of gas-light Mr. Tillotson saw she was in deep *new* black. In a second he had known all! And the good Captain, after a natural start, had his

hand in both of his own, with an ejaculation of comfort and pity that seemed to be drawn from the bottom of his heart.

* * * * * * *

"God help us all, Tillotson! The poor, *poor* little thing! I declare my old heart is broken!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

AFTER this blow, a hopeless gloom settled down on Mr. Tillotson. He shut himself up dismally. He would see no one. If there were clouds over his hitherto wretched existence, his life now had become lost irretrievably in the blackest night. Mr. Bowater deplored his absence from the bank, or rather his lack of interest in its concerns. "One of our best men," he said, "when he chose to exert himself!"

The old feeling had now taken the shape of remorse. "It was my doing," he said, again and again; "all my doing. I have this now on my wretched soul, *with that other*." And in this state, which was not, after all, grief after her who was departed, he continued for several weeks.

No one took this state of things to heart so much as the Captain. This trial had, indeed, painfully distressed him; his fine old Roman features seemed to grow sharper every day, and his eyes to get a more wistful "peering" expression. He made many weary journeys to his friend's house, who would see him, however, but seldom. At these interviews he tried all the common forms of consolation, though, to say the truth, the Captain was but an indifferent hand where artful solace was required. He himself was, indeed, "cut to the heart," as he often said, by the loss of his "little girl," and after telling his friend that "he vowed to God it was the greatest folly in the world, and surely what was the born use of it? and that if there was any sense in the thing, well and good, and what was it but what we must all come to?" the Captain himself would break down, and declare that he was only "an old hag, fit there and then for carrying out and covering up under the sod."

Of many evenings, therefore, afterwards, when the interval of many evenings had passed by from that night, the Captain sat with his friend, and told him little details of that dismal departure. "I shall reproach myself till I go to my grave," said the brave old

officer, hopelessly. "I have no more sense in my head than that old brush-handle, and it'll be the same till I'm laid in my stupid old coffin. But, Tillotson, my boy, I hadn't the heart to refuse her any thing. You recollect her little ways."

The old hopeless gloom had settled down on Mr. Tillotson's heart. "You talk," he said, almost passionately, "of self-reproach, my dear uncle. You! But what of *me!* I, that was so cold and heartless, *and failed in my duty!* Poor little soul! And I used to say that she could not understand *me!* I should have gone with her, and been with her, and not given her up for this wretched, paltry, miserable money-getting! I have this on my soul now, and, I tell you, I am sick and weary, and longing for it all to end."

"No, no, don't say that," said the Captain, alarmed. "Now don't—don't. No one could have behaved more handsomely or more delicately, and she owned it, poor little soul! But, you know, she was a child, after all, and had a little of the ways of children, and she couldn't help it, God knows. It wasn't *her* fault."

"You are right," said Mr. Tillotson, bitterly, and walking up and down the room. "I have this on my soul to add to the rest. I tell you, I am a wretched, miserable, guilty being, and deserve any chastisement which I begin to hope will fall on me."

Though the Captain was now a little familiar with these bursts, still they alarmed him. "Now, now," he would say in expostulation, "Don't, now, my dear fellow! You know yourself how my heart was in that little child, and I don't think I ever got such a scald as on *that* night. But still it couldn't be helped, and I don't believe there was a cleverer doctor in the universe than that Doctor Delahorney; and you know, Tillotson," added the Captain, humbly, "if it was God's will——"

"I know," said he softly, "you are right. But who did it? Ah! you can't deny it! No. My neglect, my *cold sense of duty*, froze up her heart. I should have gone to her, been with her, broken through all that folly, and fondled her like a child. Time would have done every thing; time would have made us forget every thing; and time would have taught us much. But I *should* have my wretched pride and my miserable brooding over my pet sorrows, and now I *have* something genuine to feed on for the rest of my days."

"Now this is folly, Tillotson," said the Captain, nervously, "and I tell you again, put the whole thing out of your head. Indeed, the poor little soul brought it on herself, as I have told you again and again. And she was a giddy little creature, and d'ye know, Tillotson," added the Captain, wistfully, "during those last few weeks something seemed to come over her, and even to me she got very positive and determined—quite a change, you know—and I couldn't make it out; and, d'ye know, after puzzling this old head of mine, I put it all to the account of that travelling fellow

we picked up on the road. At last I blundered on it for a wonder!"

Mr. Tillotson stopped short. "What!" he said, "that gentleman you were always praising?"

"Ah! there's Tom all over for you," said the Captain, shaking his head sadly; "he'd pick up any one with a good coat on his back out of the street. I ought to have known better—indeed I ought, an old fogie like me. But you know he was so book-learned, and could talk so finely, and so long. Why, he'd have a page out before you or I could manage a sentence, so that it wasn't surprising he got a sort of influence over her."

"Influence over her?" repeated Mr. Tillotson, mechanically.

The Captain had not his eye on his friend at that moment, and went on eager to explain.

"Exactly! The very thing. You know the way young things look up to your tip-top clever fellows, and you know she was very young, Tillotson; and there are very few children's heads can bear complimenting and that sort of thing, and this fellow was somehow always coming and going and hanging about the place, and whispering and *colloquering*, and I thought it was a pity, you know, Tillotson, as she was ill, to say any thing. But I give you my honour and credit, after I had heard some of those stories about him——"

"Stories? So there were stories?"

"Ah! you may well say that," the Captain answered despondingly. "A nice old fool, Tom, to take charge of a young creature. Before God, I couldn't help it. But I tell you, as soon as I saw the chap he was, I was putting pen to paper to get you over at once. Then came that sudden thing! And, Tillotson, I do believe, I never told you this before—that he was a thorough rascal."

Mr. Tillotson again started. "And you never told me all this?" he said, reproachfully. "But you meant it for the best."

"Indeed I did," said the Captain. "And I tell it you now, not to let it be pressing too much on your spirits; for you had neither hand nor part in it. Indeed, I have long had it on my mind to tell you of it. My dear fellow, you have nothing to charge yourself with. The poor little soul, she was giddy and childish, and could not help it. It was natural she should be said and led by him; for he was an uncommonly fine and dashing and insinuating fellow as you'd ask to see. And indeed, she wasn't accountable."

Mr. Tillotson looked at him strangely.

"What does all this mean?" he said. "Tell me about it fully. It is right I should know."

"Well, then, my dear friend," said the Captain, sadly, "not a word of this should have passed my lips, but that I see you wasting yourself away in this state. We have our duty to the living as well as to the dead, as every parson will tell you. My dear friend,

the poor little giddy soul, she gave me a deal of worry and anxiety; and she was so foolish—without a bit of harm in her, mind—that *that blackguard*" (and the Captain grew savage all of a sudden) "took advantage of it. I found out his game afterwards, and the secret of all his civility and attentions; and Tom, like an old Bolshero as he always was and ever will be, so long as he goes on his old lame leg, swallowed it all.

"Yes; and I heard that he was showing a letter of hers to some of his friends—a low mean trick that no Englishman—I declare to God when I heard *that*, Tillotson, I lost all patience with him, and I sent Captain Peters, an old Ninety-fourth man, now on half-pay, with my card, to tell him he was a low scoundrel, and Peters was just the man to give him my very words. And he told him so; but then, Sir, begad, he showed the cloven hoof. He did! Talking about meeting an old man——" said the Captain, "what did he mean? I was young enough to face him, or any coward like him—and so Peters told him, with great presence of mind. And then, egad! he dropped his tone. I'd have put my ball into him as true as I would have done twenty years ago. I suppose he thought I was some old cripple fit for a hospital, the sneaking impostor! But Peters gave him his mind, and was near making it personal, too; and I'll never forget it to Peters."

"But, my dear friend," said Mr. Tillotson, "you surely did not——"

"No," said the Captain, sadly, "he saved us that trouble. Peters went home and had his Joe Mantons all ready oiled, in the kindest and most friendly manner; and, indeed, God forgive me, I was thinking of it with great satisfaction, for we had only buried the poor little soul the day before; and I'd have had him in front of my barrel with great comfort, when he trumped up a story, Sir, about a telegraph message, and his old mother or grandmother dying. Then, Sir, I saw what the fellow was. Catch an English gentleman doing that! Why, Sir, he'd have let his mother or his grandmother die fifty times over before he'd disgrace himself in that way. Not that I didn't like my mother. God forbid."

"But she—tell me about her," said Mr. Tillotson. "Is it certain——"

The Captain shook his head. "Best let it be as it is," he said. "It wouldn't comfort you to hear. Indeed, God forgive me for saying any thing about it. But it's all for your good. I can't see a fine fellow wasting himself away in that style, and not say a word. From what I saw, my dear boy, and knew and found out, I think you have done well enough. There's reason in every thing. God forgive my old heart for saying a word against the poor thing; but indeed it's right you should know. And now there's the whole truth for you, neither more nor less, and not a word of lie in it; and I mean it for the best, telling you—before Heaven, I do!"

Mr. Tillotson took his hand silently, and wrung it. "Indeed I know that," he said. "Well, so there it all ends then."

"To be sure," said the Captain, almost gaily; "and that's right. After all, my dear Tillotson, it's only the poor girls—God help 'em—that have time for moping. Why, look at you. A fine dashing handsome fellow, with the world before you, and plenty of brains (I wish old Tom had a little corner of your head,) and by-and-by all this will pass by. Care killed many a cat, my dear boy, and did no good after all."

"We must only try," said his friend. "I am a bad hand at any thing like strength of mind or exertion."

"Tut, tut!" said the Captain, repeating his old "common form" of consolation. "Is it a fine well-made fellow like you? Why, who knows," said the Captain, wistfully and in a sort of reverie, "but we may see you with a regular family yet growing up about you? And why not? We weren't all made to be moping like prisoners in a jail. And I tell you what, my dear friend, look at me! Look at that foolish old Bolshero Tom, stuck in the mud like an old mile-stone, stopping the road in every body's way. Often and often my old father—God rest his soul—said it to me. 'Tom,' says he, 'you'll be sorry for it when you come to my age.' And so I was, faith."

Then the Captain fell off in talk about the last moments of her whom he called his "little girl." Several times his friend interrupted him, taking snuff savagely, and using his handkerchief.

"I am no better than an old woman, and should be sent to the poor-house. God forgive me, for an old numskull, that might live a hundred years more and never get sense. To think I hadn't the wit to manage a child like that! But it came on so very sudden, Tillotson; even Miss Diamond and the maid, *they* didn't think any thing was coming," added the Captain, after a pause. "Poor little soul—poor little soul! She's an angel, maybe, now," he said, with a wistful air of doubt.

Mechanically the other repeated the words after him:

"Poor, poor little soul! And did she say any thing—give you any message to me, you know? I dare say," he added, bitterly, "she spoke of me—forgave me, perhaps, for my desertion of her. I should have been with her, indeed!"

"No, no, no!" said the Captain, eagerly. "On my word and credit, no! She was speaking of you every minute—wait, she did tell me something to tell you, and I was in an ace of forgetting it. Bosthoon for ever! Yes, about the lawsuit trial."

"Oh, that was it!" said he, absently.

"Yes, she was very particular about it. Yes, let me see the exact words now. You were," added the Captain, slowly, resolutely, and by degrees—"you were to go on with the trial. She begged you'd fight it while there was a shot in the locker: and if

you got the day—d'ye see me now, Tillotson?—you were to take care of poor Miss Diamond with it—set her up comfortably, and Martha," added the Captain, checking off on his fingers, "and a hospital—something about a hospital for orphans. I'll think of it all to-night in my bed. But you were to fight it while there was a shot left—that was her dying wish. Says she to me, poor child, 'Nunkey,' says she, 'as I did not get what I thought I'd get,' says she, 'I may as well have the purchase-money back again, and do what I like with it.' What d'ye think she meant, Tillotson? Maybe she was wandering.' But those were the words, for I got them by heart."

"No," said he, with a sigh, "she was in her senses indeed. I understand them perfectly, and her wishes shall be carried out to the letter."

At this moment the servant brought in letters, just come by post. Mr. Tillotson looked at them mechanically. "The bank," he said, half bitterly. "They want me back again, I suppose?"

"Then again," said the Captain, eagerly, "that might be the salvation of you. I wish I had been bred to business when I was young."

Mr. Tillotson was reading his letters, and gave a little start. "Poor Bowater," he said, "gone too! Death seems to be coming in where—now—even into banks."

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT FROM MR. TILNEY.

More than six months had passed away since that evening. Mr. Tillotson had gone back with an enforced ardour to the concerns of his bank, and had begun to find in it, if not a fascination, at least a distraction. The death of Mr. Bowater, M.P., our "esteemed and valued chairman," had left a "void in our council almost impossible to fill," so at least said the company's report, couched in terms of deep financial affliction. However, when the day of the half-yearly meeting came round, which it did in a few months, the sorrowing council and officers prepared with great alacrity to replace the loss they had sustained, and there seemed to be a private impression abroad that the new substitute for the lamented chief would be a better man. "We want new blood," said the secretary to director A. B. "Poor old Bowater talked a little too much," said A. B. to C. D. "There was more wind in him than sense," said another on the board. This seemed a little inconsistent with the sorrowing report. But when the day of election came round it was determined, according to the secretary's phrase, to "run Tillotson" for the place. This might seem a curious selection, for he was indifferent and languid, and only lately had begun to take interest in the concern; but he had many recommendations. He had a great deal of money in the concern; he was a gentleman by birth and connection, which, strange to say, seemed to have an extraordinary charm for such as had neither; and lastly, he had a "first-class head," could "see into a granite wall," &c. The secretary even quoted some last words of "poor old Bowater when near his end," when that financier was babbling away of *his* green fields, Foncier stock, and the Plata securities, in reference to the management of that Bhootan business. "The Duke of Wellington could not have done it better than Tillot-

son," was the odd form of praise he used. When the day of meeting came round, a "glorious dividend" of *eighteen and a half* per cent. was waiting for the shareholders, being actually three per cent. more than was anticipated; so that, being in a sort of monetary rapture, the company knew not how to show their gratitude to their intelligent directory except by adopting every proposal they made. Mr. Tillotson faintly protested. But, as the Captain said, "it would be the making of him," and a blessing sent by Providence, and he could not well resist the pressure put upon him. And thus Henry Tillotson, Esq., became chairman of the United Foncier Credit Company.

It was found by this time that the premises of the Foncier were hardly magnificent enough for its prosperity. A wine-merchant, next door, had been in difficultics, and with great sagacity the secretary had come to his aid with liberality, taking a mortgage on the premises to "secure the company." In course of time, the wine-merchant having "arranged" with his creditors once or twice, and received all the indulgence paid to failing trade, finally collapsed, and it became open to the Foncier to secure these desirable premises for a mere song—i.e. some twenty-five thousand pounds. Some said that scheming company was always lucky; others said—a dissatisfied shareholder, perhaps—that everybody seemed to think they could have "a pull" at the bank. It was agreed, however, that it *was* a song. In a very short time "middle-age" Jenkinson was called in again; that architect had submitted some gorgeous plans based on the designs of the Louvre, and very soon—without suspension of business—the workmen were busy, and the scaffoldings were erected, and cream-laid stone, loamy as bride-cake sugar, was being piled up, and the new banking palace soon grew towards completion. In such daring schemes, to say nothing of "pushing on trade," Mr. Tillotson of necessity was forced to take interest, and thus gradually he was being drawn back into things of common life. At his own house at home he lived a solitary and dejected life—sitting alone through the long evenings. He had but few servants in his "fine" house, and among them that Martha Malcolm, who had not left him. That strange gaunt woman had returned home from her mistress's death-bed more gaunt, more silent, more gloomy, and perhaps more blunt and disrespectful than before—things of which Mr. Tillotson took no notice, and which, perhaps, were more in tone with his state of mind, and when encouraged to send her away, said she was a good faithful creature. Miss Diamond remained with the Captain, keeping house for him, reading for him sometimes in the evening, busy with a monotonous round of work. But Mr. Tillotson she rarely saw, and never sought; and it seemed, indeed, when she met him, as though she shrank a little, looking at him with a curious suspicious look. Though very often she came to see Martha Malcolm when *he* was away at the bank; and the two women sat together in the parlour

for hours, and perhaps talked over the "little girl" they so loved, and who was gone from them. But it was known that later she was to go away to France, and give herself up to a religious life.

One of those days when the chairman was thus away at his bank, with all the papers about a new loan to the Plata Railway—a concern supposed to be getting into rather failing health—before him, a card was brought in—"MR. TILNEY." There were other cards of that gentleman up at Mr. Tillotson's house, for he had called very often, and periodically, too, but without success. Mr. Tillotson was generally at his bank, as he might have known; or Mr. Tilney had the misfortune to find the door opened to him by Martha Malcolm, who confronted him, adhering to the door like an Assyrian figure, and gazing out with the impassibility of such images. She was as unyielding as if she were of stone, and, in truth, rather appalled Mr. Tilney, who retired in some confusion. This morning, however, when Mr. Tillotson looked half mechanically at the card that was put into his hand, soft memories seemed to rise from it, like a scent from a "box of opened flowers;" and with the scent came also dreamy pictures, and a feeling of peace, and by-and-by one of happiness. The name seemed like a dream. Association, as we know, does so much, and that so mysteriously; and he recalled then—oddly, too—another card of Mr. Tilney's, which he had found on his table long, long before, down at the cathedral town, and on which was written in pencil, "Don't forget us at seven." He put aside the Plata Railway papers, and sent down for his friend.

Mr. Tilney came in with alacrity, but with a face composed to grief. But he was greatly changed; neat and clean as ever in his dress, though old-fashioned, and perhaps old, too: yet still there were signs of wear and tear. The tall straight back was beginning to bend, and something about the collar seemed to suggest tightening and bracings to keep together what would otherwise have spread and gone wild. Above all, since that night, there had come a soft "fishy" stare into his eyes, and at times a stiffness round the edges of his lips, and, possibly, a little tremble in his hands.

He was really glad to see his friend. "My dear Tillotson," he said, taking the other's hand into both of his, "I am so glad to see you. I need not tell you how I felt *with* you; how we *all* felt with you."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Tillotson, hastily; "I *know* that. I have had my troubles since we met last. They come to us all pretty impartially."

He said this without seeing that Mr. Tilney winced a little.

"I believe so," said he. "But you know, my dear friend, what the clergy tell us. Not later than last Sunday, at the Chapel Royal, Sir (I never miss), I heard Dr. McCayenne say, that whom the Lord loved He took care to scourge with a red-hot rod of iron. Fine image. No, it wasn't last Sunday; let me see. Brindley, the

bishop, I think;" and in some doubt, Mr. Tilney paused altogether, to settle the matter inside his own brain.

"I hope they are all well with you?" said Mr. Tillotson, changing the subject. "Mrs. Tilney, and Miss Augusta, and——"

"Perfectly, quite well, thank you, much obliged to you; I shall take care to mention your kind inquiries." (Mr. Tilney always fell into these formalities even in the instance of old friends, when he had not seen them for some time.) "Thanks to Providence, who keeps off the wind from even the poor lambs, Sir, they are doing very well. Though by the way, no; I had quite forgot. Poor Ada."

Mr. Tillotson started. "Nothing has happened her? She is not——"

Mr. Tilney shook his head gloomily. "We went through a great deal with his poor child. Doctor after doctor, Sir. Had 'em all in, one after the other."

"I never heard," said Mr. Tillotson, passionately—"never. They never told me. I have been shut up here. I know nothing of what goes on in the world. But tell me; she is well now?"

"Well," said Mr. Tilney, plaintively; "we may call her well: but you may conceive the time we had of it. Doctor after doctor, I assure you, and the *very* best—Sir John Bellman. A brougham and a pair of horses always at the door. Shut up myself in the study. But I declare to the Almighty Providence—which blows down every leaf, and every blade of grass, and every single sparrow on the house-top—that I don't grudge it. For she's a true noble girl, Sir, and was true to me when I wanted it. I may say Jack Tilney, Sir, would have had a head-stone over him now but for her. God bless her! and you too, Tillotson. We all went through enough *that* night."

"And what was the cause of all this?" asked Mr. Tillotson eagerly. "By the way, I am very thoughtless, and think of nothing. This, I know, is your lunch-time;" and he rang the bell.

"Oh, now—come now," said Mr. Tilney in feeble protest, "this is always the way. We are doing very well as we are. I really beg—Why, now?——Well, I'll tell you about it." (Biscuits, and a rich and creamy Scotch cake, and sherry, had appeared with the rapidity of pantomime feast). "You recollect a man that used to be with us a good deal, in and out, you know, up stairs, down stairs, and in my lady's what d'ye call it?——"

"Ross—Mr. Ross. Perfectly."

"Ah, to be sure. Well, *there* it was, you see. The up and down state of things, now this way, now that, had a good deal to do with it. (You follow me, don't you?) I'm afraid, a bad fellow at bottom, with some fine impulses, yes, Tillotson, some fine impulses; not *radically* bad——"

"But how?" said Mr. Tillotson, hesitating.

"Well, this how," said Mr. Tilney. "Since he went away——"

"Why, has he gone?"

"Oh, God bless me, yes; to be sure," said Mr. Tilney. "Recently at Gibraltar, you know, with his regiment, the Buffs. Fine corps as ever you saw. I knew some of 'em long ago, when Lord Bob Hervey (they used to call him 'Kettle Blower,' about which a long story, Sir) and a lot more were in it. It's gone to the bad now, I believe."

"And so he has left the country?" said Mr. Tillotson.

"And as you may conceive, Tillotson, the worst accounts. Got among the Jews out there. Glad enough these rogues to discount any rotten stick of a chance he may have? Though, my dear friend I should hardly speak of it before *you*. And it's very hard between the two, you one——"

"Don't mind," said Mr. Tillotson; "it's sure to be his. When my poor wife was alive, I always considered it a little hobby of hers. Now, of course, I can say little, except, indeed, that she had some last wishes in reference to it, so I must go on with it, though merely for *that* reason."

"Ah! to be sure," said Mr. Tilney. "We heard from him only two days ago. The strangest letter, I declare, Tillotson. I think he's a little wrong *here*, you know. The idea of a man getting into a fury on paper, and with a pen in his hand. Wants money," added Mr. Tilney, taking out the letter; "and really, now, after his behaviour, if I were to tell you the story, Tillotson, it would make your hair stand up straight with horror. A family that matured him, Tillotson, and even fed him, I may say; it was very shocking."

"Indeed, I can make no excuse for him," said Mr. Tillotson. "Indeed, I do not understand him. To me he has some unaccountable antipathy. God knows, I never did anything to him."

"Precisely; and what I have always said. No one could behave handsomer; I must say that for you. Now, just read that, and see what you think of it. He knows well enough we have nothing to spare, and yet——"

Mr. Tillotson, strangely taking an interest in everything that indirectly even concerned that family, read eagerly:

"New Barracks, Gibraltar."

(It began abruptly, and was addressed to Ada Millwood).

"I wish you would try and answer my letters, or get them to answer them, more regularly. It puts double the trouble on me, to be writing the same twice over; so try and be careful, will you, this time.

"I suppose you are all going on in the same old round, Mrs. T. trying hard with the fishing nets (*she*'ll understand me), to get them round the legs of some unlucky poor devil of a soldier, who some way walks off in the end—and well for him too. He doesn't know the loss he has had in Augusta and her sister—fine domestic creatures, well suited for ordering dinner and bringing up children.

Mrs. T. has trained them well; and when she lies down for the last time (which, of course, I hope is a long while off) she will be able to say to herself, 'Well done, thou good and faithful,' &c. (you know the rest of it, being a good girl and properly brought up).

"That reminds me of the *amiable* and *gentle* Tillotson. So he is alone again in the wide world! But I give you notice, don't let him be whining to me about his lonely state, broken-hearted, and all that. I sha'n't listen to a single word. I am glad now it has all come to him, and for a reason that you won't suspect. I am glad there is no woman in the matter, so we can have done with maudlin. If you were to write four crossed pages every mail, and whine at me again and again in every line, it would be no good. 'Think of his sorrow,' 'your own delicacy at such a moment.' At such a moment! Exactly—such a moment is just the one I would choose. You'd see how they'd hunt him in the House of Lords; and I hope to Heaven he'll have the pluck to go there, and that his infernal old bank will not break about his ears until this is over; and if it does, I'd almost lend him the money to go on. And I'd advise you, my delicate young girl, to give over trying on the nun and the sweet intercessor, for I shall just do the opposite.

"Perhaps you pray for him every morning in your prayers.

"And now that our sad and mournful friend is a widower, you know, you ought to go and pray with him.

"I wonder I give myself the bother of writing all this stuff. I don't care one curse. 'How shocking!' old Mrs. T. will say; and the two unsuccessful spinsters. 'Such ribaldry, mamma!' But if Captain Skyrocket said it, wouldn't it be 'so funny!' and so 'shocking!' but in quite another sense. So I say again, I don't care one curse what any one of the lot thinks. But I shall always take my own way, and do just as I like, and not be dictated to by sneaks, male or female.

"Perhaps you'd like to have a little news about myself? With all my heart. I am very much in want of cash; so please have it made out for me. It's infernal the way they harass and persecute me. Won't let me keep my head above water; hunting me like a rat. I declare to you, at times I wish to Heaven I *was* a rat, and could go and make for some hole under the shore, where I could never be heard of again. It's a shame and a disgrace that a man like me, with a fine fortune coming to him, and as good as his own, and secured to him by two courts, should be hunted and worried like a cur dog by an infernal troop of Moors and Jews. Tell them, do, to make me out some money. You can manage it yourself. You can whine somebody out of it. If you don't, by Heaven! I'll come over and do it myself.

"I can tell you, they treat me well here; better than in your infernal England. The old governor and his wife have me at their place every second day, and old Shortall, who has a daughter too,

is precious civil. So you see, there are Mrs. Tilneys every where. I wish you saw the governor's daughter, a very pretty *little* thing, not one of your potwolloping girls—a nice creature—portable, that you could put up in your hatbox. Of course they have heard of my coming property; but she is *very* fond of me, and shows it, by Heavens. She has ten thousand from the old gov., and, if I chose, I could have her to-morrow, and if I choose, I shall. You talk of 'delicacy' and whining bilious fellows; but I can tell you, she did as delicate a thing last week—that I might have starved and rotted before any one in England would have thought of doing. She knew I wanted money, poor little darling. However, it's a long story.

"Now work yourself and try and do some good. Life don't consist in looking angelic, recollect. You can work it out somewhere, if you choose. There is a mail a couple of days after you get this."

Such was the extraordinary letter read by Mr. Tillotson, which seemed to be one written by a madman, or at least after the influence of drink. And yet he felt no indignation at the contemptuous mention of himself: he rather understood and pitied. "He is harassed and persecuted," he said to his friend, "and hardly knows what he writes." Another feeling too was present to him, and covered the whole letter, as it were, with a cloud of gold. The picture of that gentle girl, suffering, persecuted by the worldlings among whom she was compelled to live, with no sympathy for her sickness.

"*That*'s a pretty epistle for a gentleman to write," said Mr. Tilney, tranquilly—"a man brought up at a college in the way he should go—that his days might be long. And all, Sir, addressed to a poor helpless girl, that has not a friend upon *this* wide earth," added he, motioning mournfully with a very full glass of sherry, as if it were the wide planet to which he alluded, "that cannot give him back his own—or—or—call him out, and that has a peck of troubles of her own upon her hands."

Again Mr. Tillotson became eagerly interested. "Not serious ones, surely?"

"Depends, depends," said Mr. Tilney, shaking. "It all comes from nature. *She*'s sensitive, highly tip-top sensitive. The girls and Mrs. T. try us all very much. Between you and me they don't quite take to her, you know; in fact," added Mr. Tilney, with startling suddenness, "make her life a perfect hell upon earth."

The other started.

"Yes," said Mr. Tilney, now in hopeless gloom, "it comes to us all, peasant and bar'net, steward and peer o' the realm. The great Creator distributes it all much of a much. I begin to sigh for quiet and a nook of my own. They are always in a racket at home, struggling after this and that. And with the old luck, Tillotson. There's young McKerchier on now—a low young Scotch fellow in a regiment; father makes the Kidderminster things, I believe. Bu.

Mrs. T. says that's all right *now*. Money, you know, is the thing now, not blood and breeding, as it was in my day. And yet I think the fellow is going to play them a trick. Mark my words, he will. I am very glad to see you; indeed, I am. I am getting old and tired, Tillotson. Did you ever feel *that?*—as if you could never rest yourself enough. Just drop in on us when you have time; it will be a charity. Out at Kensington, you know. Better leave you a card. There! God Almighty, in His infinite mercy, bless and protect you, and reward you."

CHAPTER II.

LIGHT AND HAPPINESS.

THAT visit seemed to let in a thin ray of sunlight into the bank. Mr. Tillotson was eager to have done with his work, to get home and think. Then came back on him a hundred questions which he should have asked and might have learned. What was this illness? Was it gone altogether? And what was this mysterious relation to that half-frantic Ross? things which Mr. Tilney would have been glad to relate at length, and which he had been too stupid not to ask.

And yet some instinct—a reluctance to taking up the old coil—kept him from going near the place. Every day he had a fresh struggle, and every-day it seemed better to him not to thaw the old insensibility to human interests, which when dissolved seemed only destined to bring misery on him. At last, one Sunday evening, a day when he used to take long straggling wanderings outside of town into lonely fields where building had not yet begun, he went towards the old-fashioned part of Hampton, gradually advancing further and further until he came to the old-fashioned lane in which he knew Mr. Tilney's house was. Here were the old dampish-looking villas, where the persons of quality who wished to be near the court lived, and the mothers of maids of honour, the right honourables, who walked in the gardens, and for whom the cheerful old red brick of Queen Anne's day made a warm background. One of these ancient tenements Mr. Tilney, prompted by a natural sympathy, had chosen, having gone back, as he himself said, "like the hare, Sir," to the old scenes. It was called "The Recess," was very small and damp-looking, was surrounded by a high wall, and had an old pale green gate with green wooden rails, through which "The Recess" could be seen. He got it very cheap and found great

comfort in the old associations it brought back, and in walking in the palace gardens close by, and in also repeating that he had come back there "like the hare, Sir." But it must be said that his family did not at all share in this romantic view; and Mrs. Tilney, when she heard the allusion, often contemptuously coupled with it the bow of the violin, making the strange combination of "Hare fiddlestick! cocking us down here, in this wretched, battered old place, that any gentleman would be ashamed to be seen in."

Alas! a series of disappointments, that arose out of successes that seemed assured, had sharpened Mrs. Tilney's voice, and had latterly made her speak, when she was at all excited, as if she were calling to Mr. Tilney from the top of the house. That poor gentleman—to say the truth, in very poor health indeed, and, as his friends said often, much "shaken" by that seizure—had not the attention paid to him which his years and almost infirmities seemed to require. His family, eagerly pursuing their own schemes, always much pressed for time, being engaged with gentlemen, who had come, or were to come, and whose life thus became disorderly and irregular, could not reasonably be expected to give up much time to an old-fashioned man of the world, who, as Mrs. Tilney had often instructed her children, was "a positive disadvantage" to them. "You might as well, now," she said, "have that old walking-stick at the head of a family, for all the good he is. Having performed this Sunday evening's office, the ladies set forth in a sort of procession for the nearest place of worship. Where also, Mr. McKerchier was to be discovered, of whom there were hopes that he would return home in the family procession.

Mr. Tillotson soon found out the lane and the walled-in garden with the green wooden gate. It was wide open now, for the ladies, a little careless or abstracted, had forgotten to close it. Wide open, too, was the hall door and the windows, and the house had a sort of uninhabited air. Faint sounds of bells in the distance wafting towards him, hinted to him that all, of course, were out at devotion. Some way these bells brought back to him another Sunday down at the cathedral, and the soft image of St. Cecilia, as he recollected her, kneeling and praying. It was with a strange flutter that he stood there looking into the little garden, and something then impelled him to go in and ask about the family, especially as he might now do so with all security, for he seemed to see through and through the house.

He walked in softly; his footsteps were not heard. He pulled at a rusted old bell, which the maids of honour, perhaps, had often pulled at; but it came out nearly half a foot before he could make it sound. After a long interval, an untidy maid, who had succeeded in getting on some part of her dress as she came up the back stairs, and had thus been obliged to defer polishing her face till she was in the presence of the stranger, made her appearance. They

were all away at church, but would be back in half-an-hour or so, with the gentlemen.

"*All* out?"

"Yes."

And with a sigh, Mr. Tillotson half took out his card, but put it back again, in defiance of warm expostulation; for the maid had found that in such cases she was exposed to much persecution for misapprehending, or totally forgetting, or, in certain cases, not taking care to secure the names of "gentlemen who called."

He walked away, sadly; and as he got to the green gate, looked back once more at the house. The windows, it has been said, were all open back and front, and now, in the parlour he saw what he had not noticed before—a white figure on her knees. It seemed like a cloud. The maid had gone down again. He stopped, and, with a strange flutter, walked softly back; something seemed to draw him in. He could not see face or outline very distinctly, but a strange spell was on him, and seemed to reveal all. Now he heard, for his hearing was quick at the same moment, something like sounds of weeping; and, without pausing to think, he entered the hall, opened the door softly, and there saw Ada Millwood on her knees, with her face down on a chair, weeping or praying.

"Oh," she said, for she did not look up, "let me go. I must go—any where; no matter where. I can bear it no longer!"

He did not answer. Then she looked up, started to her feet, and stood gazing at him. Then he saw a strange change in her. Her face had grown very pale and a little thin, her eyes, yet softer, traces of severe sickness and wearing anxiety, and yet with it all a greater beauty and spirituality.

"Oh, Miss Millwood," he said sadly, and advancing to her, "what does all this mean?"

At this vision, not seen now for so long, the coldness and blankness in Mr. Tillotson's heart thawed away in a moment, and that stern resolution with which, as *he* fancied, he had encrusted his heart finally and for ever, crumbled through and gave way.

"I understand," he went on. "They have told me. I know what all this means. Oh, forgive me; but it seems as though I had been sent here to hear what you are praying for, and to aid you."

She was now recovered from her confusion, and put out her hand. She spoke in the old soft voice, which seemed to play on his very nerves with a sort of music almost divine. Every second it was drawing him away from the old icy regions.

"Do not mind me," she said with a smile. "Women are not trained to suffer. I have been ill, very ill, and have grown querulous. When I am quite restored to my old strength, I shall be able to go on in my old way again."

He shook his head, and spoke almost passionately.

"But you *should* not. This eternal self-sacrifice is not required.

We are not told to go on day after day, month after month, year after year, to consign ourselves to a living death, suffering for those who care not how we suffer. No, no, dear Miss Millwood, let your friends—let *me* come to aid you. Let this little ray of light fall upon my cold blank existence, grown even more hopeless since I saw you, since *that* night when it was my happiness to be of some poor comfort. Though I should not mention it——"

Her face lit up.

"Never shall I forget it! Never! Your nobleness, your kindness, your goodness and self-sacrifice. I have thought of it since, again and again, and in my own troubles, sickness, and some trials, contemptible, indeed, near yours, it has comforted me to think that you—*you* understood me——"

Mr. Tillotson paused a moment, and then said, calmly, "But we must look to the future now. Consult me as you did then. If you only knew how happy these things make me. Forgive me if I speak plainly; but this may not go on. I can guess—I may say I know—how matters stand with you here. *They* do not understand you—cannot understand you."

She shook her head. "No," she said, "it is a mere foolish impatience. I shall school myself in time. You discovered," she added, "what should have been a secret. It is an old story now. No; far better that I should go on and bear everything."

There was a pause. "And Ross," said Mr. Tillotson, abruptly. "How is it with him? He, I believe, is away."

"Yes," she answered; "in Gibraltar."

"I can understand the sort of interest you still have in him. I dare say, with all his wildness and ungovernable temper, there is much good below?"

"No," she answered, with eyes that flashed a little. "I thought so once; but we know him now as I fear he is—cold and hardened. That dreadful time which you recollect, we had sent to him, and he knew it all, what was coming, and afterwards what *had* come, and yet he sent us back such a cruel letter. From that night I gave him up for ever."

"For ever!" repeated Mr. Tillotson, eagerly and passionately. "Then, oh, then here is one chance more opening to me of heaven and of happiness. You say there is no release for you; that you must go on and suffer. Then I tell you, no, no! There *is* release open to you, a poor, halting release, but, such as it is, better a thousand times than this miserable life. If I dare speak now, as you spoke on that night; if I may go on and say what would, might free you——?"

A strange look, half of wonder, half of pain, came into her face, and she did not answer. The cloud came back into his.

"Ah! I see!" he answered. "The old blunder. No matter, I am long past such shame as that——"

But then an eager glowing flush seemed to chase away that first expression of hesitation. "No indeed," she said, in a voice exquisitely tender. "I am the same now as I was then on that night. What I said then I say now; and if you care for me as you did at St. Alans, if I could have any share, as you once told me, in bringing back light and happiness to your life, in changing the current of your days, in doing anything to serve you, with my life, then I am here ready, and speak to you as I did on the night I came to you from St. Alans."

Joy, doubt, even rapture, was crowding into his face. "Are these dreams?" he said, in a voice that almost trembled. "This happiness is not for me. No, no; you are thinking of a promise—and Ross——"

Again her eyes flashed. "We have done with him. He has done with us. For years I pitied him; thought that there was good underneath. Now he has shown us what he is—heartless, vindictive, cruel."

"But," said Mr. Tillotson, sadly, "do you not care for him still, —and most naturally? Even I, whom I know he hates for some reason, can feel nothing against him; you were brought up with him, you have an interest in him, and——"

"No," she answered, gravely. "I can show you my heart, and it is as I have told you."

"Then it is true, and no dream," he said, in a sort of rapture; "and I am to learn to live, after all. Dearest Miss Millwood, then once more go to you as I did on that night, and at this hour ask you to be my guardian angel, and raise me up from that dreadful depth of misery in which all my days——"

The devout eyes looked up to heaven. Her hand was laid softly in his, the gentle voice seemed to chime like a bell.

"As I told you," she said, "from that night, whatever you asked, or wished even, it would be my joy, my pride, my wish, my delight to carry out!"

A little cloud of doubt and hesitation came into his face,—he paused—but he took her hand. At this crisis they heard a step. They heard Mr. Tilney's voice outside in the garden:

"Tillotson here? God Almighty bless me! Where? When did he come? Bring him in." And with numerous questions he led the way into the drawing-room.

Mr. Tillotson only waited a moment; he was eager to be gone.

"But my dear friend," said Mr. Tilney, faintly, "dinner—a joint—I want to speak to you." But Mr. Tillotson took his leave very hastily. "Then I'll go with you a bit of the way," said Mr. Tilney.

Mr. Tillotson was glad of this. On that bit of the way he hurriedly told him what had happened, which had the effect of making the other stop short in the middle of the road and say:

"God bless him!" with singular fervour. "Well, well; after

that, I don't know what to say—but, after all, it is for the best. And may Providence, in His infinite bounty, look down on you this night, and direct you in the true course! Amen. So be it, in secula seculorum, my dear boy." And having thus solemnly invoked a blessing on the business, he seemed to think he had done his part.

Mr. Tillotson walking on air, with a thrill and a sense of unbounded happiness pervading him, his friend could not keep up with him. Mr. Tillotson told him hurriedly his plans. He framed out his schemes with a fluency and excitement hitherto unknown.

"I shall begin to live now. Heavens, what a change! Only yesterday I could have given up life with indifference, now I cling to it! It is too much happiness for me; and to you indirectly I owe much of it. You must let me help you now. You have indeed claims on me, now I am of yours. We shall find the means, depend on it."

"My goodness!" said Mr. Tilney, overpowered by this kindness. "No, no; you must not think of it. Good gracious, to think that we get up in the morning——" And quite in a tumult of gratitude, he left this reflection unfinished and uncertain in its meaning.

Long they talked over the details. "And that poor Ross, too; we shall talk of him. You said he was going to marry out there. I shall never rest until we are all happy—all, all."

He walked upon air. He had begun to breathe—to feel. The only pang he felt was, that so many years had passed by fruitlessly. Still there was yet time to live. Long, long after, his eyes wandered back to that evening and to that scene, which seemed to lie under a soft halo of calm golden light; by far the happiest evening in Mr. Tillotson's life. He could hardly realise it; the whole had seemed so distantly improbable. He had gone down with the idea that even the bare possibility of the sight of that almost divine image would soothe his dismal temper.

"I look upon it as a great blessing, too, indeed," said Mr. Tilney. "The Almighty is very good to me; and as for Ada, she is as good as gold, every bit—perhaps," added Mr. Tilney, reflecting, "much better. I give her to a good and virtuous man, who will make her happy and contented, and I can feel that I have discharged my duty by her, that—as we all know well, Tillotson, and have been told over and over again from the pulpit—that our days may be long in the land." Suddenly changing from this perversion of a scriptural promise, Mr. Tilney said, with alacrity, "Look here, mail in this morning; the beauty and regularity of that company is surprising—the P. and O., as they call it. Every thing has its appointed times and seasons, and unless they observed regularity and punctuality, Tillotson, why, you know, they might as well—as well blow up. Where would we all be? A letter from our friend at Gibraltar, who, I will say, take him for all in all, has the knack of coming down straight on his legs wherever you put him. There's the new gov-

ernor; Sir Henry Herons, K.C.B.—Shortall sent home—has put *him* on his staff at first go off. And, my dear fellow, governors, you know, are like other people, and *will* have daughters—eh?" Mr. Tilney's eyes assumed a deep significance. "Now, can we blame him? I always said the fellow knew how to do for himself. Set him down in the Windward Islands, or the Archipelago, or on that little cage, the Dook's Monument, or any where you'd name, he'd do. He is all in all with the governor and his daughter—a girl of engaging person, Sir, and, I believe, a very fine provision. But the connection, you know—connection is money—and the Herons are cousins of the Despensers, and *that's* the way. Wait, I have my glasses here; I'll just read you a bit of it. Where is it?" And he read: "'Louisa is a pretty name, is it not? I'm beginning to think so. Others are beginning to think Ross a prettier one than Herons. To tell you the truth, I am getting tired of being a vagabond, and want to settle, and when you have a fine splendid girl—a true thumper, you know—with money, and her father a governor, I begin to get shaken. I'm going to think it over to-night. They are dying to have me—the girl, of course, and the parent. I suppose, because of my prospects. He was always asking me about it, and told me that he had a letter from a very well-known lawyer, who says every body is agreed that I am secure. So as soon as we sent that white livered—ahem!——'" and Mr. Tilney began coughing in some embarrassment. "Speaking of his attorney, I suppose. Then, he goes on, 'It is very likely I shall screw myself up to the point.'"

A smile passed over Mr. Tillotson's face. "I am very glad to hear this," he said; "and, shall I confess it? for more selfish reasons than you suppose. Since I saw you last, I have been a little troubled on his account, for he really had some claim here; but really it does seem as if this idea had been suggested by Providence—every thing, I believe, turns out for the best in the end."

"No doubt, Tillotson," said his friend. "But between you and me, I had my misgivings. He is such a wild mad devil, as I may call him, that there was no knowing how he would have taken it. By this time he knows all, and I bet you," added Mr. Tilney, smiling, "a couple of glasses of crusted old port, ten years in bottle, Sir, that at this moment there is a little case of those silver what-d'ye-call-'ems—filigree earrings, brooch, stomacher, *and* comb —on its way to England, as a little wedding present; something Moorish—a rich shawl. He has good impulses, say what you like."

Delightful Sunday evening! As he walked along by the tranquil common, and the little old-fashioned houses, and the disorderly and roccoco patches of brick, and saw the alder-trees, and the charming sweep of park and plaisaunce not yet ravaged by the spoilers who come with their sickly jaundiced-looking bricks and plaster, it became to his eyes a sort of sweet innocent rural retirement,

overflowing with a pastoral innocence and unsophistication, like some lovely Swiss valley out of the traveller's beat. How charming was the sun, the voice of nature, and the beauty of things never noticed before!

These were, indeed, the happiest days in Mr. Tillotson's life. He lived and moved as in a dream. The earth had new-born charms for him. Every day he was out at the pastoral little village, and there he met Ada's tranquil face; not, indeed, overjoyed, nor reflecting back his open unconcealed rapture, but full of a calm content and gentle gratitude and hope. Her "sisters" had always said that they *envied* Ada's wonderful impassiveness; and one often said, if the sky rained diamond bracelets, she would not stoop to pick them up.

Sumptuous things, however, as costly arrived, not indeed from the sky. The young ladies, too, who at first seemed to be aggrieved by *any* marriage taking place within a circuit of so many miles about them, were conciliated by presents almost as sumptuous. So was Mrs. Tilney, who accepted her offering languidly. Often the whole party came into town for an opera, a dinner, or a play—a kind of little festival. These things were all new to Mr. Tillotson, and he listened first with curiosity, then with wonder and interest. But a greater feast to him was the pure face of Ada, as it rested on her hand, turned towards the far-off stage, and its faint outlines, with the old devout absorbed expression, as the grand sounds and the swell of orchestra and chorus mounted towards her. No one like her appreciated that gorgeous combination of voices, instruments, scenery, lights, flowers, passion, tragedy, comedy, story, poetry, beautiful women, fine men, grace and motion, which make up the wonderful ensemble of THE OPERA! Certainly the happiest days of his life, even the dull routine of business, were gilded over. It was even noticed that, from the new cheerfulness always found there now, his face had almost altered. There were jokes at the office in explanation. "Don't you know he is to be married? Fellows always look that way *before*," &c.

And thus more than a month more passed away. A day had been fixed, chiefly by Mr. Tilney's agency, who seemed to think the whole burden of the affair was on him, and had to be carried through by him. He would arrive very hot and eager at the bank, at all hours, and ask for a private interview with his friend. "We are getting on," he would say, "very fairly. I am beginning to see my way, Tillotson—clearing the ground for you by degrees. You must give us time, you know; not push us too fast." Though what the ground was, and what was cleared from it, it would be hard to say. But the Captain, with less officious zeal, was of infinitely more profit. "Don't tire yourself," he would say, "my dear boy. Leave it to old Tom. I like pottering about in this way and doing little jobs. It amuses me." And the Captain, who had

singular arts for negotiation, and who, in fact, by his sweetness of manner, had half his business done before he opened it, limped from this place to that, from this tradesman to that, sat on a chair, and had long pleasant conversation with "as nice and gentlemanly a fellow as you would ask to see in your own drawing-room." And in this way he saved his friend all trouble.

Every day, too, as the interval shortened, the change in Mr. Tillotson was more marked. He seemed to grow brighter and happier every hour. With the Captain he often sat for hours of nights, and to him he confided all his hopes and speculations. It was now come to only two nights before the marriage, and towards eleven o'clock the Captain was rising to go, and saying he must "stump it" home, adding, as he put on his large coat with the collars, that "good people were getting scarcer every day." Though, "as for that matter, Tom wouldn't be over-missed."

Mr. Tillotson laughed, as he had begun to do lately. "My dear Captain," he said, "no one would be so much missed. At this moment I cannot say what a comfort your kind words and assistance have brought me. I can't be grateful enough. Miss you!"

"Nonsense!" said the Captain. "I don't believe you, Sir. Get along. You, with a beautiful young woman in your head, fresh, and fair, and young, and talking of missing an old shandradan like me. Well, I think we have nothing more to do or think of. Every thing's plain sailing now, my dear boy. So don't trouble your mind, and sleep sound. And if only, Messrs. Boswell and Hunt send me home my new and true-blue frock-coat, superfine doubled milled, extra finished—those were the very terms—if they only let me have it in time, as they promised, I'll do. I was only measured this morning, and it *is* hard on them, the creatures; but this old head is beginning to forget. Egad! now I remember, I saw your friend Tilney this morning. I just got a mutton-chop for him, well done, and he said he never tasted a better bit. So good-natured of him. (But I must say for Biddy she can turn out a chop like no other woman.) Well, he says they're all talking of young Ross's good luck, and that it's a deuced good thing for him. And he told me to tell you," added the Captain, searching his memory anxiously, so as to give the exact purport of his message. "Yes, that there was a mail due to-day or to-morrow, when he had a letter which he would send you."

"I am so glad," said Mr. Tillotson, with deep gratitude; "for, to tell you the truth, that was the only misgiving I had. I thought he had a sort of attachment for her all through, which he would not admit even to himself. I took this idea into my head; I don't know why. And, my dear Captain, it troubled me for a time; for, with all his faults, you know——"

"It's turned out now as snugly and comfortably as if it was bespoke," said the Captain, with great enjoyment. "And do you

know, now that it's all past and gone, I had my own misgivings. Those violent young fellows, you know, full of blood—But, thank God, we have 'got shut' of all that. Good-night, God bless you."

And away "stumped" the Captain, full of happiness, smiling to himself as he went along, and now as pleased, he would have said, "as if he had got a hundred-pound note into his hand." He would have *said* that, naming such a gift as a sort of standard, though such a present would have given him very little pleasure, unless to give it away.

And thus through the London streets, in a pleasant complacency to all men of good will on earth, the Captain had a slow but pleasant walk home that night.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S VISITOR.

It had now come to be the day before Mr. Tillotson's marriage. That day had glided on to the evening and to the night. It was about nine o'clock.

On this night the Captain's thoughts were taken up by an operation in which he delighted. His moderator lamp, in whose mechanical arrangements he felt pride, had gone astray. Not, indeed, from his handling, for his touch was as gentle and tender as a woman's, but from a new housemaid who had over-wound the machinery. The Captain had wondered at the disorder; with his specs on had pryed into its very bowels, but could make nothing of it. At last, not without a prospect of enjoyment, he had fixed this night for a thorough overhauling of the lamp, was determined to make a regular "job" of it, and had got out his tool-box. There was nothing on his mind; for, punctually at the hour fixed, the tailors had sent home the "shoeperfine" blue frock-coat, and it was lying sprawling over an arm-chair, with its sleeves stretching out like a coat in drink.

The table had been cleared, the lamp was laid out for operation. The Captain's tool-box, his files, little hammer, small saw, and the like, were all disposed "handy;" and the Captain himself, in a faded flowered dressing-gown, which clung in very close to his knees, was walking about nearly ready to begin, very like a medical

professor about to illustrate dissection on a "subject." It was likely to be a delightful engineering night. He, indeed, loved such operations dearly. His grandest work, to which he used to point with a justifiable pride, was a sort of "guardhervine" (so he styled it), which, after more than a week's hard labour, he had constructed out of a plank of Honduras wood given him by Captain Shortall, formerly of the 50th or "dirty half hundred," a corps to which the Captain himself had belonged. It was a wonderful production, though a little rude, and something after the pattern that Crusoe might have turned out. But the lamp indeed was, as he admitted with some misgivings, of a higher school, "more in the whitesmith's line."

He was limping round the room, was stooping over the lamp with a chisel, and peering down into its windpipe, when the housemaid entered. Did she feel any compunction when she saw the Captain ominously remedying the mischief her hands had caused? The soft eyes were lifted with that wistful peering look.

"Well, Mary," he said, "what's the best news with you?"

Mary, habitually dirty, being indeed of the class known as "thorough," murmured something.

"Speak up, Mary," said the Captain; "anything wanting? You see this Bolshero lamp has run astray. I'll bring him to his trumps, never fear."

Mary answered him, still murmuring (it *must* have been guilt that was oppressing her), that some one was below.

"What is it?" said the Captain, a little testily; but mark, as he told the landlady after, it was for her good, and that he did it "a purpose to shake her up." "Speak out, girl, and take those pebbles out of your mouth. A gentleman below—who is it? Mr. Tillotson?"

"No, no, Sir; a gentleman in a cab, with luggage on the top, and he wants to see you particularly."

The Captain looked wistfully at his lamp, then down at his dressing-gown. "My goodness!" he said, "who can it be? And I not fit to see a Christian. Go down and ask his name."

"Here's his card," she said, holding it out with the tip of two very dirty fingers.

The Captain held it close to the light and peered at it through his "specs." "Mr. Ross," he said, "—th regiment! Why, goodness! what can he want?"

Already there was a heavy violent step on the stair, and a sharp quick knock at the door.

"Can I come in?" said a rough voice. "I want to see you for a moment;" and the Captain, peering over his lamp, his file in his hand, saw entering a young man with flushed or sun burnt cheeks, and rather glittering eyes.

"Don't wait," said Ross sharply to the girl. "Go down; I want

to speak to this gentleman;" and, turning his eyes on her, he waited steadily till she had gone. "Now," he said to the Captain, "I know of you, and have seen you, though I dare say you don't recollect me—Ross—do you?"

The Captain, still in wonder, could only murmur, "We all thought you were away abroad."

"Ah, you did! I know you did," said the other, with a burst. "They thought it was all snug and secure. They were not up to me, Sir; and there is not a man living that is, if I lay my mind to it. I have come back, landed only this morning, and I've come to make those who would interfere with me behind my back pay for what they have done. I will, if I die for it! No man ever trifled with me yet that I didn't punish him; though I may ruin myself. It's *not* ruining myself, if I do what I want."

The Captain was gazing at him with soft eyes, with senile stupidity, as it seemed to Ross. But he little knew our Captain, who was only unworldly and foolish in his own concerns, but whose utter unselfishness in the concerns of others made him knowing and as skilled in human affairs as a trained man of the world. He was thinking what was best to be done.

"Do you understand me?" said Ross, flinging himself into a chair. "Do you follow me at all—eh?"

"Yes," said the Captain, putting by his tools; "egad! I do. I have heard Mr. Tilney speak of you—often, egad. But, you know, I don't see much of what's going on. You must be tired after your journey. Have a glass of wine or something, added the Captain, getting out his keys, going towards the "guardhervine."

Ross made no answer, but went on as if no one were by:

"Ah, yes; they didn't know that I could be as cunning as any sneak among them. I can bear any thing but that mean, devilish, shabby juggling behind a man's back—a mean, cowardly, disgraceful trick. Getting a poor fellow out of the way—shipped off. I believe the fellow got the regiment sent out of the country on purpose. He has money, and those Horse Guards ruffians will take money for any thing!"

"I think you are wrong in that," said the Captain, calmly. "The Duke of York, who was commander-in-chief in *my* day, was a true gentleman, and so was Woodcock, his secretary. No, no, Mr. Ross, we haven't come to that."

Ross looked at him abruptly.

"Look here," he said, getting up; "listen to me, now. I beg your pardon for coming in on you in this way; but I always heard you were a gentleman, and I believe it. The fact is, I am worried and miserable, as I always am when I find mean sneaking scoundrels trying to beat me. Of course *you* know all about it—the lawsuit and every thing—of course they have told you; and that white-faced mewling-puling creature, Tillotson—I'll expose him.

He had a mean jealousy of me from the first day he saw me. Look at that," he said, putting his finger on the scar, now indeed rather inflamed; "that was his doing—set on me in the street, in the dark, with a scoundrel. That was fine and manly and generous, and out in that place I was stung or scalded there, and look at the infernal state it is——"

"My goodness!" said the Captain, peering at it, and now a little confused at the circumstantial nature of this charge.

"What d'ye think of *that?*" said Ross. "You are an honourable and a good man—isn't that enough to embitter life? But never mind; listen to me, now do, I beg you. Tell me what's going on. I know nothing—was at *his* house on the way, and they told me he was down in the country. Where is she? Speak out and tell me every thing—do. You will save some dreadful business happening; for, by"—swearing—"I never forgave the man that tried to trick me."

The Captain now began to think seriously that this young man *had* perhaps been drinking. He saw, too, that he was in a dangerous mood.

"My dear friend," he said, "I can understand it all, perfectly; but you must take it quietly. As for me, you know, I live out of the world, and am long past that, and hear very little. Of course, knowing Tillotson, I heard he was to be married to a fine young creature."

"Ah! *that's* it," said Ross. "You are coming to it now. What's the day they have fixed—come."

The Captain tossed his head.

"I declare *I* couldn't tell you; you might as well ask me the calends. The lawyers and the settlements take time, you know, and won't be hurried. I suppose next month."

"What!" said Ross, starting. "Do you tell me that? Why, they wrote to me this week——"

"Egad, I don't know. It may be to-morrow or next day. I only tell you what I hear," said the Captain, calmly, "and what Tilney, in that chair, told me; but I may have bungled it."

"Next month?" said Ross, in an agony. "And I might have waited and come away regularly. Now I am ruined utterly. No matter, it shall come out of *him*."

"Eh—what?" said the Captain, eagerly. "How ruined?"

"How ruined?" said Ross. "I suppose when a man leaves his regiment without leave, and goes on board a packet that is just sailing for Europe—eh?—*I* suppose *that* amounts to something?"

The Captain was struck with horror. "Leave the regiment without the commanding officer's leave! Why, I'm afraid they'll break you for it."

"Let 'em—I don't care. I can break some one else. Let *him* look out. But, just think, all *for nothing*—are you sure?—only

think, a life I was fond of—men that I liked—and all for this mean sneaking fellow." In this way the unhappy Ross went on for nearly an hour, going over the same thing again and again, threatening and fiercely denouncing, and now bemoaning himself piteously, and really exciting the pity of the honest Captain. "You see," he said, falling in this last mood, "the truth is, I always liked her and loved her, and no one else; and she loved me, worshipped the ground I walked on, until this fellow came with his money. It is very hard on me. I have no money, and never had any—never could keep it if I had; and now I am finished—disgraced for ever and ever! Think—little better than a common deserter!"

The Captain tried to cheer him and comfort him. "It will all come right. I am sure these things can be settled at the Horse Guards. There was poor Tom Crostwaite, who went off to Paris for a month, and he was to have been broke; but his uncle, Lord Mountattic, knew the Duke, and someway they pulled him through."

"Bosh! *I've* no Mountattic nor uncle."

"Take my advice," said the Captain. "Go back by the next packet, and join your regiment, and put the girl out of your head. The less we have to do with the women, the better. You know it's natural, the creatures; they'd like to have a man that has money, and can give them the comforts they want. Besides, we were told—wasn't there a fine young girl out there—eh?"

Ross stamped furiously. "That's the *point* they make, is it? No matter, I shall see my way yet, and beat them all with their money and their tricks. I'll see this Tillotson to-morrow at his bank, and then you'll see. He's such a whining sneak, I bet you a guinea, in a half-hour he gives up. No violence; don't be afraid. That's always his way; so soft and gentle. Sugar wouldn't melt in his mouth. Why, the girl loves me over and over again. I've letters that I'll show him, and show *you*, too, if you like. Why, she worships my little finger more than him or his bank put together. Those Tilneys force her into it. I see my way, I can tell you. We have a little breathing-time now. I'll settle him, though, at once. Then I'll settle my own affairs. The governor out there will stand by me. I have more interest than you or he thinks. Why, they daren't break me, as you call it. I defy 'em. And I'll win my suit, too. Then *I* shall have money. Not to be married for a month. I wonder the bridegroom could wait an hour. Ha! ha!"

It was one o'clock nearly before he went away, to the Captain's infinite relief, who, however, congratulated himself on what he called a good night's work. The Captain thought over the situation very earnestly before he went to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON

We should have seen the Captain on the next morning, in all the glory of his new "shoeperfine double-milled frock." It was as glossy as the skin of a snake. He had a flower in his button-hole, and the "rayshurs," which the Captain always prided himself on having in the finest possible order, had done their work with surprising smoothness. His wig was glossy, and his whiskers, curled into barrels by "the French iron," almost reflected surrounding objects. He was bright and brilliant, as indeed befitted the occasion of a wedding. The job carriage, which he had secured in homage to the festival, was waiting, and the landlady and the landlady's children were on the stairs and in the windows to see the Captain come down and go off in state. The Captain was almost ashamed; for he had, besides, a man-servant, with white gloves, whom an old friend had insisted on sending, and who held the door open, and touched his hat very often, and who, we need hardly say, was munificently and beyond his merits and expectations rewarded at the close of the day.

On his road down, the Captain more than once felicitated himself on his diplomacy of last night. "It was uncommon lucky," he thought, "that he paid me that visit, or more uncommon lucky that it came into my old head to just put him off with that story. God forgive me! They'll get on their travels comfortably, and my poor fellow will feel it for a week or so, and then make the best of it. I am afraid bad is the best, any way. They'll break him, as sure as my name's Tom. Indeed, they couldn't help it — a fellow taking French leave of the ranks in that way!"

It was a lovely day, with sun out and no wind; indeed, as lovely "as if it had been bespoke," to use the Captain's expression. Very soft and charming looked the little townlets through which they drove smartly—the Kews and Putneys and Sheens, with the common and inns with the green, and the signboard hung from the tree in front. Then they came to Richmond, which set the Captain a-musing, for some misty days began to rise before him of a dinner there with General — then Captain — Cameron, when the Captain "got into a row with a civilian fellow of the place," and broke one of the policemen's hats; and "egad!" said the Captain, telling the little history, "we had to give the poor fellow a plaister for his old hat—two guineas, no less—or we'd have to spend the night in the black hole." That is to say, our Captain had to give that sum, for his friend was unconscious of what was going on, and the Captain

would have died before "bringing up" such a trifle as that. Then came the Thames and Twickenham, and its pretty meads, and finally Hampton itself, where the wedding was to be.

At Mr. Tilney's house was great excitement. For once the family had thrown themselves unselfishly into the business, and co-operated with a surprising ardour. There was to be a little déjeûner, "strictly private," said Mr. Tilney, "not a soul. Wouldn't do, you know. Just to invoke God's blessing on 'em before they start, and speed 'em on their parting way."

This last view was reasonable. But how the blessing was to descend did not appear so readily. Many times, too, he had himself officially invoked such blessings with great fervour. But what took up all his thoughts was what he would call the déjeûner, and just, as on another night, which he had sad cause to remember, so now he was busy, with his coat off, giving finishing touches to the table, backing, taking sidelong glances to get better views. In this department, it must be said, he excelled, and the table certainly presented a very artistic appearance. But though it was to be thus strictly private, he had just stipulated for "old Crozier," as well-bred a man as you'd ask to see, and who, in right of his sister, Miss Janet Crozier, enjoyed a mouldy suite of apartments at the palace —a suite of cells they might indeed have been called—old Crozier's title to these privileges coming through the Honourable Mrs. Crozier, who, years before she had married the Honourable Crozier, had been indistinctly "something about the palace." With this pair, a little mouldy in their habits and memories, Mr. Tilney had made an acquaintance in his walks in the Hampton green lanes and Palace Gardens. With this pair he had enjoyed mouldy "teas" in the little cupboards of rooms which the royal favour had allotted to them.

Never had Ada Millwood looked so charming, or so graceful, or so Grecian, as on this morning. She was grave, though not sad, and in the light of the sun her wonderful hair played and glittered; and indeed, by a sort of arbitrary association, brought back to Mr. Tillotson a Sunday morning long ago passed by, when she was sitting in the old cathedral, the music from Dr. Bliss's organ rolling up and down the choirs, and the tone of the day seemed as if it were a Christmas morning or an Easter. This thought came into the mind of the new Mr. Tillotson, looking at least five years younger than he had done a month before, and full of a bounding happiness. "It seems to me," he said to Mr. Tilney, "that everything ends to-day, and everything begins. It is a new sun for me—a new life. It is too much happiness for one like me, and I feel I do not deserve it."

It was to be early. "No fuss, you know," said Mr. Tilney; "just quietly and nicely—quietly and nicely. Whom He has joined, you know, we may not put asunder; but get 'em in quietly and nicely for a bit of something, and then go off. God Almighty, in

His infinite mercy, bless 'em both! Keep that little Mayonnaise cool. Ah! who is this?"

It was the Captain's carriage, and the Captain himself stepping out with his bright yellow glove on the shoulder of the servant. "'Pon my word," he said, "we came along in style. That off horse is a great stepper. And I say, my man, while we're taking care of ourselves, I hope you'll do the same, and let me know." And the canary-coloured glove was laid on his waistcoat-pocket. Two fingers went to the brims of the two hats very promptly, and the two gentlemen, talking over the world together on the box, agreed that this was an instance of true, real gentlemanly feeling, now unhappily too rare, and that others—especially a "stuck-up old 'oss" at home—might well take pattern by such a model.

Now on to the church, the pastoral church of the place, in a little procession—Mr. Tilney's and the Captain's carriage. For this day Mr. Tilney was the father, in the highest development. All the way, in his high-collared coat, he was invoking fervent blessings, and "recalling the past," gliding from a blessing to a reminiscence, and from a reminiscence to a blessing. "Ah, dear, dear! Poor Croker, I was just sitting by him, like this, and the Dook behaved in the kindest, noblest manner. Gave *her* a heart with an enamel thing over it, sent only the night before. It seems like the day before yesterday. Such is the way we go, and so must we lie. Tillotson will make you happy, I know. He is good. He is everything I could wish. May the great Being bless and——Here we are!"

Here they were at the church—of the old country church pattern—a quiet tranquil place of worship, which seemed to nod and doze, as many of its rustic congregation had done during the sultry summer evenings. There was a placid young curate, who did most of the duty, and was in much esteem among the decayed ladies and gentlemen who lived in the genteel royal hospital at the palace. Men of his age and station were very scarce in the little settlement, and he was a favourite guest at the "teas" in the little cupboards. He was now to perform the marriage rite for Mr. Tillotson and Miss Ada Millwood.

All the honourables had heard of the event; had heard, too, that Mr. Tilney had been about the court in the grand old days before the general decay of fashion, and morals, and manners had set in.

The placid young curate was already coming out, with a resigned and suffering bearing, and the bridal party were ranged at the rails.

The Captain, with the canary gloves (a little large and baggy on the Captain's thin fingers), stooping forward to drink in the young curate's words with the deepest awe and reverence; Mr. Tilney, with his head raised, repeating the words of the rite almost half aloud; and Mr. Tillotson, with a clear brow and an air of joy. From that morning he was to cast away all troubles; even that dark shadow, by whatever it was cast, was to be before his eyes no more.

The train of happy days, life itself, was coming. Even for the church, so pastoral, so innocent, he felt a strong affection.

It was done. The placid young curate had all but chanted his service in a manner that surely deserved a higher preferment. To some of the hospitallers in the gallery he suggested an indistinct idea of one belonging properly to another world, whose fleshly tenement was detained below here by the stern laws of our kind, whose lips were, indeed, mechanically repeating the form of words, but whose soul was above. All this seemed to be conveyed in his sweet and most mournful voice. The Captain said it was "the most beautiful done thing" he had met with for a long time, and by as "well-made a young fellow as ever put on a gown." May we not suspect that this performance had unconsciously an effect on the fortunes of the young curate? for Miss Mary Sidney was in the gallery, who, as we all know, is connected with the noble house of that name, and who, perceiving the divine instincts of the young man, worked heaven and earth for him; and it is certain that within a month he was translated to a brighter and better living, and there can be no question but that the Reverend Mr. Sweetman received this reward through her good offices.

It was now done. The admirable young curate had retired, with a suffering and seraphic look, as who should say or sing, "My heart is a-weary, a-weary, and yearneth to fly away like a bird;" and here were standing at the rails Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson—the new Mrs. Tillotson—the second Mrs. Tillotson—and here was Mr. Tilney invoking blessings with all fervour, and here was the Captain wringing the second Mrs. Tillotson's hand, on which was a bracelet bought with the Captain's own money, and which he had cautioned the jeweller to take care should be "tip-top." The Captain's simple congratulation was worth the whole. "My dear, I hope you will be very happy, and I know you will."

Now we pass on into the vestry, to finish the necessary beginning. Mr. Sweetman is there, already unrobed, postponing "flying away like a dove," to offer his gentle congratulations. There were the necessary joys, with which human creatures down in this vale of tears *must* solace themselves. He could understand and have allowance.

There was a room beyond the vestry, and then came the outer door. The Captain stole away "to see for the carriages," for he did not want to have the new Mrs. Tillotson kept on the steps with the small boys staring. He stood on the steps peering out wistfully, and with his hand shading his eyes, but could not make them out. Instead, a cab came driving up hastily, the door of which was half open, and a gentleman jumped out and stood before the Captain, whom, after a moment, he recollected as his visitor of the evening before. It was Ross, with flaming eyes and sunburn cheeks. "Now," he said, "so I have caught you. I'll settle

with *you* by-and-by. But I have some one else to look to now. Here, let me pass!"

Captain Diamond had seen the whole breadth and depth of the situation in a second. Perhaps he blushed a little.

"You must not go in!" he said firmly, and falling back to the door. "You are not wanted here. Take my advice, and go home quietly."

"But I *shall* go in," said Ross furiously. "Do you think I'll put up with this? What fine trash you tell, you hoary old deceiver, with your cursed lying stories! Here, let me in, if they have begun!—here, only let me see that whining Tillotson! Let me by, I say, you cursed old canting soft-voiced fellow, that I was a fool to listen to!"

The Captain's face grew pink; he cocked his almost shovel hat in a moment.

"You be cursed yourself," he said, "if it comes to that, you low-minded fellow; you're no gentleman! How dare you speak to me, Sir, in that way? Here's my card — Capt — I mean Mr. Ross. Though I am old, I was brought up a gentleman, and can teach you breeding. How dare you swear at me, Sir? If you can beat up a friend, send him to me, Sir, and I'll give him my opinion of you, and g—give you any gentlemanly satisfaction afterwards. There—there, take it, Sir!" And now the Captain having got his card-case open, held out, with trembling fingers, his card.

Ross looked at him with surprise; then gave one of his loud laughs. "What d'ye mean by that?" he said. "Oh, very—very good!"

Who would have known our Captain, whose cheeks were growing pinker every moment?

"You can laugh at me, can you?" he said. "By Heavens, Sir, I'll not wait for your friend! You won't get out of it that way, my young spark. I'll have some one with you before the day is out. But I know how it will be. An ungentlemanly fellow, come here to raise a low blackguard disturbance in a church."

The gentleman who had been looking on from the cab had now jumped out. "For shame, Ross, to speak that way to this old officer! I declare I blush for you! You must excuse him, Sir. He has been sadly worried, and has come home expressly about this marriage. It is his excitement that speaks, not he himself."

The Captain touched the shovel hat very graciously to this intercessor, who, he said later, "was as fine, broad-shouldered, well-built, polished fellow as you'd ask to see in a company."

Ross had been listening vacantly all this time. While the Captain was in front of the door, he said eagerly, "But the marriage—is it begun—are they going on with it—is it over? I suppose it is. Oh, I beg your pardon; I do indeed. Now do let me—I must go in."

The Captain was softened at once. "I may as well tell you," he

said; "it's better not. Drive away in your cab; it's the best thing you can do. Take an old soldier's advice. You know there's no help for what's done."

"I thought so!" said Ross desperately, and now quite subdued. "It's quite what I expected. Do you mean that it is over? Speak out plainly, do, and let's have the truth. Not that I care, no! but," growing savage again, "but——"

The door softly opened behind the Captain, and a white figure stood before them. All started. "Go away," she said hurriedly: "I implore of you, go away. It is all too late. I tell you that. Go——"

"Too late!" said Ross, quite overpowered by this surprising vision. "Too late; yes; always too late. Oh, you false, cruel, heartless girl! *You* tell me this?"

"False!" she said, "no. But that is all at an end now. Go away, I implore of you. False! no; it was *your* doing."

"My doing!" repeated Ross hurriedly, and speaking with bitterness and fury. "And were you so stupid, so blind, so little of a woman, to believe my stories? I only wrote to worry you, to try you. But don't tell me; you know those little stale tricks well enough. I praise another woman, and you believe——"

"That is all past now," she said. "But what I wish, is to have no confusion, no scene. He who has been so good, so devoted, must not be disquieted. I would sooner die. Go, I implore you."

"Come away," said the gentlemanly friend, "as the lady asks you. I won't be a party to any exhibition of this sort. Come."

"Ah, now," said the Captain eagerly. "Go, like a good fellow. Show yourself a man. I know you are too much of a soldier and a gentleman to make any scene when a lady asks you. *That's* it. 'Pon my word, I feel for you from my heart, I do indeed; and I declare, when I think of it, I am ashamed of the way I behaved." (They were going down the steps gradually. Ross, with gloomy, glaring eyes, answered not a word, and let himself be led off.) "But I am such a touchy old fogie. I am always making a fool of myself."

They were now at the bottom of the steps; Ross looked back sharply, but the vision was gone. He tottered into the cab. With deep sympathy in his soft eyes the Captain looked at him, not wishing to say anything, nor even administer consolation; then touched the shovel again as they drove away. As they did so, the vestry door opened, and Mr. Tilney appeared at the top of the steps with another head behind him. Mr. Tilney's sight was none of the best.

"No carriages yet, Diamond?" he said; "they must have gone round to the other door." But here were the carriages coming plunging up—Mr. Tilney's and the Captain's. Room on the steps for the new Mrs. Tillotson, pale, leaning on the arm of the happy,

happy Mr. Tillotson. Brightest of mornings, sweetest of days; yet not more bright, more sweet, than the tumult of happiness, of pride, of joy within him. The furies of gloom, dejection, and perhaps remorse, were scattered, gone for ever. The fairies of hope and joy were fluttering round, had taken possession, and made him their own. Surely if mortal man might look forward to happiness, it was the young Mr. Tillotson, positively not more than thirty to look at but in reality some five or six years older, who divided the step with that lovely girl.

Now the door is shut with a crash, and they drive away.

The Captain's carriage next, scattering gravel, and the Captain's temporary servant holding the door open. The Captain gives seats, as a matter of course, to the whole Tilney family, being sadly squeezed himself, and the "poor hip" similarly incommoded for want of room to stretch it out.

While Mr. Tilney was in the drawing-room, with his finger in Mr. Crozier's button-hole, and Mrs. Tilney and her daughters were clustered round Mrs. Crozier on the sofa, and the whole room seemed to glisten with white bonnets and white ribbons, and all were waiting for the breakfast, no one missed either the Captain or the bride. She was "getting ready, you know," said Mrs. Tilney; and as for the Captain, it might be assumed that he was settling with somebody financially.

Now comes the breakfast. In turn we have a speech from Mr. Crozier; and then Mr. Tilney, taking a great deal of his own wine "to keep himself up," is in a chronic state of insatiation of blessings.

And then they go away to the Continent, Mr. Tilney tells his friends piteously, "only for a time, you know." The Captain is infinitely relieved as they get off safely; for he has been disturbed all through the meal with sad misgivings of some fresh interruption or trouble.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAPTAIN.

THE "happy pair," as Mr. Tilney always spoke of them, had been on the Continent more than a month. He received letters from them regularly, which he was fond of carrying about in his pocket, and of pulling out to read to persons whom he met.

"They are at the Rhigi now. They will be at Lucerne to-morrow

night." "Had a letter from our travelling friends from Genoa. Wonderful the way they travel now." With these he was fond of dropping in upon the Captain about two o'clock, and to that kind old officer, and in presence of a third influence, he would read out the closely written fluttering journals that arrived from Ada Tillotson. The Captain with his face well forward, and hoisting himself noiselessly on his chair to ease the stiff limb, listened with many a "Ah! my goodness now! see that. I declare she writes like a book." Mr. Tilney, by way of simplifying some idioms which he thought might confuse the Captain, interposed, without lifting his eyes off the paper, a running commentary of his own, which his friend accepted devoutly enough as part of the correspondence. Thus it seemed to run:

"We came here, my dear father (she always called him by this name), last night. It is a wonderful place, all glittering; and as we came in from the sea at six in the morning—the sea seemed like molten silver, and so like the scenes in the opera—I could not conceive anything so lovely, and the old harbour, and the Italian shipping, and the mole, and the old gateway down at the water's edge, and the soldiers and peasants!"

Mr. Tilney, with his eyes on the letter: "Ah, Genoa, Genoa! justly called the Queen of Palaces. A great place once; might have seen it myself over and over again, if *I liked*. *We* have ranged many lands, but the city for me, is beautiful Genoa, pride of the sea; is beautiful Genoa, pride of the sea!"

At the last words only Mr. Tilney looked up from the letter to the ceiling, lost in reminiscences, leaving the Captain a little confused.

Sometimes the Captain received a letter himself, which took him "a good morning" to read, and helped him through the early part of the day very pleasantly. In the evening, Mr. Tilney might drop in, and the Captain would exhibit his letter with great satisfaction, which, however, Mr. Tilney put aside, with a "Ah, yes, of course!" as though *that* was a different thing; allowing the Captain, by a sort of sufferance, to read it through, but hinting that he knew its contents beforehand.

It had been, indeed, a charming tour for them, if peace, joy, and unsurpassed content could make any thing charming. It was new life to both. That dull passiveness and insensibility to nature and to the world—which, if scrutinised too nicely, may turn out a shape of selfishness—had all gone. In its room had come an eager curiosity and warm enthusiasm; and thus together did Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson travel from town to town, from valley to valley, from hill to hill, charmed with all. The foreign gentlemen and ladies noted the thoughtful Englishman and the golden-haired lady with him in galleries and churches, who seemed delighted with all they saw.

They saw many countries. They travelled to Rome and Venice, and saw all the wealth of churches, and colour, and gold and silver,

the delicious skies, the cobalt seas, and the new shape of landscape so refreshingly welcome to the stranger. Coming home they came to Genoa—that gorgeous little amphitheatre of picturesque homes and more picturesque port, and then took a carriage to post along that poetic sea-coast, peep in as they went along at the little towns and villages which stud that shore and glitter like gold and spar brooches. It was she who kept the route and planned it, and he asked no questions, was delighted with all he saw, and accepted the present.

The sun was setting on one of these evenings, and they were in their little open carriage, looking down towards the sea, which seemed as of rich and melted cobalt, when she, with her book in her hands, called out:

"Another hour, dear, and I shall have a surprise for you. I did not tell you we were coming to it—Spezia!"

He did indeed start at this name, but not with surprise. His face turned pale and his fingers trembled.

"No, no," he said, in a low faltering voice, "not there—not there! I am a strange, odd being," he went on, in a sort of appeal, "and full of fancies. But not *that* place—I *could* not enter. Would you mind our driving on farther, and not stopping there?"

But she entered into this motion with a soft alacrity, as if it was the most natural thing in the world. The coachman was told, and by a circuit they avoided the sparkling little town which she was dying to see.

But this holiday would only last a short time. They were coming home; for the great bank, growing and swelling day by day, required its nurse and guardian. They were coming home, having seen all the shows usually seen on the grand tour nuptial. Mr. Tilney came to the Captain and read him a letter, now from Marseilles, now from Paris, and finally from Boulogne. They were to be at home on the next evening.

Just before he had gone away, Mr. Tillotson had taken a house in Lowndes-square, and left it in charge of skilful decorators. The Captain often walked down during these operations. Indeed, a daily visit to the house became a favourite pastime. He contracted a firm friendship with the chief decorator, who explained to him his plans and processes; the deftness and neatness displayed in papering and gilding specially delighting our Captain. Yet with the furniture people the Captain would assume a little authority and vigour; for he knew that his friend wished it to be all ready and furnished by the day he returned. "See, my men," he said; "stir, stir, now. This will never do! See that fine lazy young fellow there, that should be in the dragoons, and he's not doing half the work of the older men. Come, Sir, what are you trifling about wasting our time here? You haven't spirit enough to earn the pot of porter which I'll take good care the steady working men get who have put their

shoulder to the wheel. And you, Sir, what are you at? I declare, with my lame leg, and all, I'd be worth more to my Master."

He made a prodigious effect among the men. At last all was done and completed by the day fixed. The house was fresh and bright, the rooms sumptuously furnished, and the men had been sent away for a final "pot of porter," which they partook of, saying, as so many had said before them, that the Captain was a "deal more of a genelman than some lords and hurls" they could name, and whose mansions they were busy with. Two charming carriages were in the coach-houses, and the Captain himself, who had a fine eye for a horse, had helped to choose "a noble pair of chestnuts." Mr. Tillotson had earnestly prayed of him to take the whole responsibility of this affair upon himself; but the Captain, perhaps too modestly, declined. He was content to act as assessor to a sort of honest dealer and trainer; though he modestly owned that, as far as the cut of a horse went, he had a right to know something.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN.

At last, late in the evening, the house was lit up and brilliant, the new servants were in the hall waiting, and the new brougham, which had made its first professional journey that day, came driving up from the South Eastern. The door was opened, and the master of the house and the new mistress entered. She was almost dazzled by the magnificence and the light. Under those lamps Mr. Tillotson's brother men of business would not have known the bright, almost rosy and handsome man that had returned. In those foreign lands on the Swiss mountains he had left all his troubles. Her face, too, was full of trust, calm confidence, and happiness.

On the stairs they were met by Martha Malcolm. "This," said Mr. Tillotson, all but introducing her, "is an old servant, as I may call her—Martha Malcolm, our housekeeper—all but a friend."

He was so overjoyed at every thing that it *did* seem as if he had known her affectionately from childhood. The golden-haired lady smiled on her, and said something about her being sure they would be friends. The other stood stiffly and grimly, but did not answer.

"Now we begin our London life," said the bridegroom, when they were alone. "We are to have no troubles, and no sorrows; at least I feel a conviction of this. I had the same as we went away, and I have been right. I believe there have not been such happy days upon earth since the creation." He added, smiling, "You are

to be queen here. Do what you please, what you like; command, order; we shall all be your slaves. If you should *wish* specially to please me do give me a treat or a surprise, ask me for something difficult and almost impossible; recollect that. Promise me; only I am afraid," he added, with a sigh, "you care too little for these things."

She took his hand. "You are too good to me," she said, "and I will do what you say."

"You promise me?" he asked.

"I do, and more. I shall begin this very night."

"This makes me happy," he said, joyfully. "Come, quick! Money! How much?"

"No," she said, slowly, "not that. You know we are very happy. But there are others not so fortunate. What I would ask you about is poor Ross. I find a letter from him here."

Mr. Tillotson started. She went on faster:

"He is unfortunate; he is miserable. He is, indeed, not accountable. He has bad friends, who work on him and excite him. But he is naturally generous and good. What I would ask you is to bear with him, and be generous, as you have always been."

A little shade had passed over Mr. Tillotson's forehead like a light cloud, and was now gone. "To be sure," he said, warmly; "just what I have always felt to him. I promise you."

"But what I mean," she said, doubtfully, "should he be rough or rude--which he can be, I fear—and this assisted by a sense of misfortune——"

"I understand," said he, almost gaily. "Let him say what he please, *do* what he please, *it never shall make the least difference in me*. There, are you content now?"

"You have made me so happy," she said, giving him one of those old smiles which had often come back on him like gleams of light in his cold chambers. "Oh, so happy! This was the only thing that was troubling me. Now it is gone, *all* else is gone too."

When they had gone through the house, and he had shown her every thing, the piano, the pictures, her boudoir, with the harmonium that was all but an organ, with a hundred little tokens of care, and consideration, and unwearying solicitude to consult her tastes,

"You are only too good to me," she said, with the old look and old smile; "and, indeed, it will be *my* fault if I am not as happy."

CHAPTER VII.

A VISIT.

DURING his absence the Foncier Bank had made great progress. It had become a rich, plethoric, almost obese association. The clever secretary had pushed it with extraordinary energy and success. It was looming and drifting along the great City waters like a huge Spanish galleon. Some little unpretending banking-craft, coming incautiously under its stern, were swallowed up and destroyed. Its shares were at a fine premium—indeed, not to be procured; and the secret was, every one said, "it was so judiciously managed:" you had Tillotson, and "men like that." But what could ever make up for the loss of Bowater, who was so calm, so steady, and so courteous? Should we ever forget his indescribable eye travelling down the rows of figures? His place was not to be readily supplied. We must only look about, however, and get in new blood. This was always the secretary's cry, "Blood! blood!" like a ferocious financial Thug—that is, "new blood."

The secretary had in his eye the quantity of new blood that was contained in a certain Mr. Bushell, who was known to the public as "the great Bushell," and who was, besides, said by the same innocent public to be able to do what he liked with the Bank of England. He was an enormous contractor and railway proprietor; made railways, bought railways, made huge works, and was now busy getting up a vast society for supplying railway shedding—huge roofs of unlimited span—to every company in the kingdom.

The prospectus of "The Universal Railway Roofing Company (Limited)" had been in every newspaper for the last month. Like every other thing that "he put his finger to," the admirers said, this also would turn into gold. Yet he was a stout, heavy, countryman-looking operator, slow of speech, red in face, very often wore a huge waistcoat and a baggy dissenting clergyman's tail-coat in the morning. Such a man, the secretary said, would be worth his weight in gold, which would have been a very large weight of gold indeed; and the question of his adhesion to the Foncier Company had been only postponed until Mr. Tillotson came back.

It has been mentioned that it was a different Mr. Tillotson that came back—a gay, hopeful, cheerful Mr. Tillotson, with a brow that was open and clear, and a tongue that was loosened; with a wit and judgment, too, as his colleagues found, that had been surprisingly quickened. All his sorrowful indifference had passed away. He anticipated their reasons, and struck out brilliant ideas. But against the admission of "the great Bushell" he was strong. He said, truly,

they were doing admirably, and the bank was strong enough; that such men were dangerous and uncertain, and could only prove a dead weight on their operations.

At several board meetings the matter was gone over and over again. It was urged yet more strongly, and as a chief ground, that he had an enormous account with their house, which it would be a pity to lose. At last Mr. Tillotson gave way, and in the next report the directors "had peculiar gratification in recommending to the shareholders the well-known name of William Bushell, Esq., for election as a director, the value of whose adhesion to this great society needs not be pointed out." William Bushell, on that, joined the board, and the very week after paid in as a mere current account a sum of over twenty thousand pounds. "I shall, of course," said the great Bushell, "have now nothing to do with any other house." And he came regularly to the board, in his dissenting tail-coat; said little, but to the purpose. He did not, however, like Mr. Tillotson from the beginning, who, he said, wanted "stuff," and was not the man for the place.

Mr. Tillotson, only three weeks after his return—when this matter had been finally settled—came home gaily and hurriedly; for he was a little late. He knew that two of the fine saddle horses which the Captain had chosen were being walked up and down before his house. For every day they went out happily to ride in the park, and both found a new delight in this exercise. But the horses were not yet brought round, and he was about to run up stairs to apologise.

The gentle figure, in her riding-habit, came down softly and laid her hand on his arm. "He is up stairs," she whispered; "poor Ross! he has been here this hour—such news—in a miserable state, and oh, dear husband, you will let me remind you of your kind and generous promise the other night, for he wants all your indulgence. They have disgraced him—turned him out of the army. So that if he is at all fretful, or ill-tempered, I know you will——"

There was a little struggle. Mr. Tillotson's open face glowed with deep sympathy, and almost grief. He took her hand. "Let us go to him. We shall help him in some way, in spite of himself. And, as to my minding a word he may say, you shall see. Now watch me."

They went up. Ross was standing with his back to the fire, worn and dejected, with lines in his face, and his hair wild and tossed. His face lighted up when he saw them, and he gave an impatient stamp upon the rug. But Mr. Tillotson advanced to him with his hand out and the kindest greeting. "My dear Ross, I am so glad you have come to us. You must keep up, and not be cast down. Every thing will come right again, and if one thing goes a little astray something else will turn up. We shall *make* it turn up."

Ross was embarrassed by this sweetness and warmth. He looked up moodily. "Ah, *you* may say that who are on the right side in

every thing: you were born to luck. I was not. It is very easy to give comfort of *that* sort; but what does it mean?"

"Exactly," said the other, heartily; "a most sensible question. Now sit down there, and let us *all* draw our chairs together, and look into the business, and we shall see what it means. There."

The word "all" grated on Ross; and, as he turned to Mrs. Tillotson, he saw her face suffused with gratitude. That look stung him, and he pushed away the chair.

"I want no councils held over my affairs," he said. "I am no pauper coming here to beg money and aid. Do you take me for that?—tell me. Do you suppose I have come to you for that? Answer me."

"Heaven forbid!" Mrs Tillotson answered, in the same unruffled tone. "You have merely come to friends."

Ross tried to laugh. "Friends! That's not so bad. Understand me. I want nothing. From this house at least. I have lots—lots of friends! I have just come to see this—Mrs. Tillotson here. Any harm in that? Is it a crime? Do you object?"

Nothing could disturb Mr. Tillotson. "So far from that, you shall be always welcome. I am afraid, then, we are not to venture to try and help you?"

"Once more, Mr. Tillotson," said the other, roughly, "give that up. I've come here to see *her*. True, I have left the army, or say, if you like, they have turned me out. Well, if they have? Better and more honourable men than I am have been turned out. Infernal jobbers! If I was a lord, or had a lord or cousin or an uncle at the Horse Guards, how soon the matter would be jobbed over! It's as vile and as rotten a den as there is in the kingdom. And what did I do, after all? What thousands have done. And why did I do it? Was it to shirk duty? No, before God. And then they go and disgrace me—disgrace me—that I never can hold up my head in decent company again."

Both faces were turned to him with deep compassion.

"Now, dearest Ross," she said, "that is what gives you a claim upon us. *We* know why you came away, and why will you not let us take counsel with you, and see what can be done? We know people that have power, and we could get——"

"We this, we that," said Ross, bitterly. "Charming partnership, isn't it? I want none of it. I was sick of the army."

"Things will mend, never fear," said Mr. Tillotson, cheerfully. "You won't let me do any thing for you, so I shall not say any thing more of that. Still, if you care to come here and consult your old friend, and if you can let us persuade you that there is nothing waiting you here but sympathy and regard, I hope you will come very often—when you choose, in fact—dine with us."

Ross looked at him doubtfully, then said, half sulkily, "Why should I? Yet it's no such great compliment, after all."

"Exactly," said Mr. Tillotson. "Now we look at it in the proper view. No compliment whatever. Come when you like—go when you like. Is that agreed?"

Ross gave a rough laugh, and took his hat.

"He has wonderful virtue," he said. "They should canonise him. They were making a saint at Malta when I was there. Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the kingdom, you know. But they don't win lawsuits, my friend, for all that. No, no. They are content with another kingdom, and *must* be on this occasion. Make up your mind, Tillotson, with a good grace, for it's all up with you."

"With all my heart," said Tillotson.

"Good-bye, then," said Ross.

A servant came in, now, saying that Mr. Withers, from the bank, was below. This was some special business. Mr. Tillotson went down and came up presently. "No ride to-day, I am afraid—for me, at least. This dreadful business waits for me for half an hour."

Mrs. Tillotson was standing there in her riding-habit, a charming figure. The golden hair was gathered back behind in a rich knot. She looked like a statue of some saint. Mr. Tillotson turned to her hastily.

"You must not lose your ride," he said. "Here—if Ross would take my horse. You need not go into the park."

"Oh, no," she said hastily.

"But, oh yes. I insist; that is, if your friend Ross can go."

"Well," said the other, half eagerly, "I have no objection."

"There then, that's settled," said Mr. Tillotson; and went down to his business.

In a moment the horses were round, and the golden-haired lady was out upon the steps. She ran in for a second to her husband, and gave him a grateful whisper. Ross helped her up, still moody, then mounted himself. Martha Malcolm held the door open till they were gone. As they turned to ride away, Mr. Tillotson came out for a second to look at them, which he did with pleasure.

"Kindness, after all," he thought, "will tame that poor outcast yet, and make him gentle. She is an angel indeed, and looks one. God grant I do not feel too happy at this moment."

Suddenly he heard a harsh voice beside him.

"That's a pleasant and agreeable arrangement, Sir?"

"Yes, what, Martha?"

"That. Is it to be regular and every day?"

"Not every day, Martha," said he, smiling. "He is in trouble, poor fellow, now."

"So it seems, Sir," said Martha, gravely, "and requires comfort."

Mr. Tillotson smiled again, and went into his study. He looked

on Martha as a privileged but faithful retainer; a legacy, too, from the fair little lady who had died in foreign lands.

In an hour Mrs. Tillotson came home very eager and excited with her ride. She ran to her husband in his study. "It is all going on *so* well," she said; "you are only too kind and good. I am sure he will give no more trouble now. I have talked to him and reasoned with him, poor soul; and he has half promised me."

"Half," said he, smiling. "Do I not know that there can be no half promises made to you? Well, I am very glad, too, that *you* are pleased."

"It has been a greater weight on my mind," said she, thoughtfully, "than I liked to own to you. With all his follies and faults, he is good and amiable and honourable; and I myself was somewhat to blame. By the way we met that friend of his, Grainger; more his evil genius than his friend. You remember him at St. Alans?"

"A sort of traveller," said Mr. Tillotson, "and a sneering traveller."

"Yes," she said; "Mr. Tilney somehow liked him, but I never could feel easy in his presence. I am sure he is crafty and wicked, and if we could withdraw Ross from his fatal influence—but I suspect—and he seems to be in his power—I think he has given him money, and our poor Ross, of course, cannot pay him."

"I remember his admiring *you*," said Mr. Tillotson, "and that is the only thing I bear him malice for. As for the money, if you can settle *that*, too, and rescue Ross, you know where to come to."

"Always good, too good," she said, with one of her own soft smiles, and went away to change her dress.

Another happy evening for the banker. Did he not think that life was actually growing more and more like paradise every hour? Between him and his figures, that night, seemed to dance a crowd of fairies—spirits that seemed, with grotesque feet, to make steps that took the shape of the words of happiness and delight.

Some few more days—nearly a week—and Mr. Tillotson went with alacrity into his banking concerns. He was coming round gradually to the heavy, almost silent Bushell, who, when he spoke, said a couple of words that were as valuable as a cheque. Still was the bank growing; it bade fair to be the very megatherium of banks, and the secretary hinted that there were vast schemes in the brain of "the great Bushell" which, if he could be induced to impart, would set them all rolling in gold.

He came home one evening after one of these meetings thinking of the pleasant ride in the park that was before him. He had got to the top of his street, when he saw a gentleman come out of his home and hurry away. He recollected his face perfectly, as that of the Mr. Grainger he had known at St. Alans. He wondered what could take him to that house, but knew that in the ride Mrs. Tillotson would explain it.

He wrote a letter or two, then the horses came round, and they went out. It was a charming evening, and they had a delicious canter. They stayed out a long time. This was more of happy life. They were to dine out, and came home about seven. Still Mrs. Tillotson had made no mention of her visitor, nor of her visitor's name. He wondered at this with a little placid wonder, but knew very well that there was reason for it, or that there was some defect in himself or in his way of judging of it. Still, it was a little curious; and when she had tripped up stairs to get off her habit, the idea came to him that this had been only "a call," and she had known nothing of it. He smiled at his stupidity. "And they call me a business man!"

Martha Malcolm was passing his study, when he asked her, carelessly, "Anybody called here to-day?" The grim Martha told him a gentleman had been there nearly an hour. Mr. Tillotson wondered again; but once more dismissed the matter as "a little curious," setting it all down to some imperfection on his side. Then they went out to dinner, which was at a City house, and were received with great respect; and through the night, though the matter came drifting back upon his brain, it grew fainter and fainter.

The visit had been of this sort: Grainger had called, had been shown up; a strange gaunt man, with wild eyes, and a ragged look about the lower part of his face, but, on the whole, was more ragged now and wilder than in the old St. Alans' days. He had been knocking about, as he told his friends; had spent some "tearing nights," and was said to have lost much money—nearly all he had—at the Homburg or Baden tables. Yet he never lost the old quiet, gentlemanly, almost soft manner of his.

Mrs. Tillotson was in the drawing-room writing, and started up to go when she saw him. "I beg your pardon," he said, in his softest voice; "I have no right to come; but this has fallen out most fortunately, for I wish to see you."

Mrs. Tillotson answered coldly, and gathered up her papers calmly, as if to go. She knew more of this man, and of the mischief his influence had wrought upon Ross, than she had told her husband.

"You *can* have no business with me. Mr. Tillotson will be back in half an hour, and if you choose to wait——"

"Then I shall go," he said, with deference. "I have no business with him. What I wished to say can be said in two minutes. It is about Ross. I know you have always had a prejudice against me, and I must say a just one. I deserve it. I have a certain way of life, and I am the slave of that. I have no power over myself. But I have some regard for Ross. But I came to tell you that he is in a strange frame of mind—that he is infuriated by a succession of disappointments; and what I would ask of you—not of Mr. Tillotson—is to be indulgent, to soothe him as much as you can, or he may *turn*

out dangerous to your husband. That is all I have come to say. You have been very indulgent in listening to me so long."

Mrs. Tillotson had grown interested. The motion he had made to go looked genuine. Without sitting down, she said irresolutely, "I know something of this. I believe what you say. But we have seen him, and talked with him, and he is inclined to be kind and quiet."

"Look here, Mrs. Tillotson," said Grainger, earnestly, and coming back closer to her. "I may or may not have reasons for telling you this. I say I have an interest in him, and, though you will not believe me, an interest in you. You know very well, in your heart of hearts, you are insecure about Ross. You cannot depend on him. I tell you and warn you that he is altered. He has let things prey on his mind. *One* thing especially, which even I did not suspect he would have so taken to heart. You guess that, I can see. If you had seen the way he behaved after it, or had you seen what labour fell on me, or what days and nights of weary watching I had to go through, to keep him from something desperate, you would give me more credit for good intentions. I tell you it is a serious matter—if you value the happiness that I am told you are now enjoying, and if you value his, your husband's, comfort, love, quiet, and perhaps *life*."

She seemed a little scared by all this earnestness, and dropped into a chair half unconsciously. He did the same.

"But tell me," she said; "he could not mean—he was so kind, so gentle——"

He interrupted her.

"So he might be now, but it is all slumbering. A word, a look, will set him in a flame. Do not think this is fanciful or exaggeration. If a policeman heard him only last night it would be his duty to arrest him. I do not so much mind the present; it is the future that I dread. This lawsuit—he is as sure as that the sun will rise to-morrow to lose it. It is a foregone conclusion. He has not a chance. I know it. Well, when *that* day comes—it's only a month or so off—when he is left without money or *hope*—when he is a disgraced man, as he is now, and a ruined outcast, as he will be then, and an outcast stuffed with pride and a sense of injury—this is the moment that I dread and shrink from. We may *all* humour him until *then*, but afterwards—Now, Mrs. Tillotson," he went on, in a changed voice, "this is what I came to tell you. You may put what motive you please upon it; but what I have said I *think* looks like truth. You can act on it as you think fit, but you may depend on my doing my best. As for Mr. Tillotson, if I might advise here too, I would recommend his *knowing nothing* of the matter. His own generous and unsuspicious nature will be his best protection, and leave him quite free to act. But you can do as you please. I only recommend."

There was something in his manner that half awed, half con-

vinced her. In her grave gentle way she thanked him. He saw in her face that she accepted all he had said. He rose up hastily and looked at his watch. "These two minutes," he said, "have stretched to a quarter of an hour. I must go. Good-bye, Mrs. Tillotson;" and he left her.

For a moment she was undecided; but she thought it over, and, for the sake of her husband, resolved to say nothing of this visit, which, indeed, seemed a wise resolution.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. TILNEY GIVES COMFORT.

BETTER times had set in for Mr. Tilney. After many scruples, and much sincere delicacy, he had been induced by Mr. Tillotson to accept a moderate loan, "at five per cent. interest," as it was most carefully stipulated; on the strength of which he had taken a little house towards Chelsea. All this had produced a wonderful alteration in his looks and spirits.

"I declare to you, Tillotson," he said, as if making a very handsome concession, "God is very good to us *after all*. Do we do half enough for Him in return? It astonishes me they don't insist more on that view in the pulpit. He sends us every thing—the house-top and the sparrows—but what do *we* send Him?"

Mr. Tillotson, always sweet-tempered and placid, quite accepted this more devotional view of imputing the obligation of his own services to the highest source of all.

"I see a deal of Grainger," Mr. Tilney went on, one day—"a deal of Grainger. A nice creature, but spoiled. A fine nature originally, but gone to the deuce, Sir, for want of religious culture. The man has about as much religious sentiment in him as—as the funnel of that lamp."

"And who was he?" asked Mr. Tillotson, interested: "where does he come from?"

"One of the best families, Sir," said Mr. Tilney; "no better in all Burke. I knew his father, Pat Grainger, well—no man better. No man could have a nicer, or more genteel, or a better-appointed table. His own crest on every thing. Lovely damask, Sir. It was a great pity."

"What?" asked Mr. Tillotson.

"Oh, the break-up," said Mr. Tilney, as if he was speaking of a slip. "It is very odd, do you know, they all do that so much,

Most singular. Left his family in a miserable way. How this man has kept himself is a marvel. Has travelled, mixed with the best, and yet I vow to Heaven, this moment, I don't know where he could lay his hand on three-halfpence. Yet I respect him for it. My dear Tillotson," continued he, warming, "don't you agree with me that a man with no visible means, and yet who keeps up a good appearance, has a good coat on his back, sees company, goes up to his dinner-party, and pays for his cab, is—is really—*one of the noblest works of our Creator?*"

Mr. Tillotson smiled at this new definition. The other went on:

"Poor Grainger. He used to be great with us, you know, down at St. Alans, running in and out, like a pet rabbit—no one to question him—no one. And, indeed, I may tell you *now*, Tillotson, now that it's all past, and gone, and laid by—that he had always rather a—you know—what the French call a pongchong for our dear child of earth with the golden hair—I mean, the present Mrs. Tillotson."

A faint tinge coloured the other's cheeks. "Indeed," he said, eagerly. "I never heard or even suspected this."

"No," said Mr. Tilney, plaintively. "No, no, I dare say not. We never let the worm in the bud prey on us—in such cases, at least. Girls *will* be girls, and like having men after them; and to the end of the chapter. It's the same with the whole kit of 'em."

"But," said Mr. Tillotson, a little excitedly, "I think you are wrong in all this. For, from what *I* saw at St. Alans, I should say, if there was any one she disliked——"

"My dear fellow," said the other, patting his arm in great delight, "*you* have not seen the side of the world that I have. It requires a life, Sir, to know women and their ways. The very man they curl their noses at, and turn their backs upon, is the man they like. She liked listening to our friend's stories of shooting the tigers, and his swimming the rivers with his gun in his teeth. You remember Desdemona and her black man. My dear Tillotson, take this truth home with you from an old soldier that has," added he, with great cheerfulness, "had his heart broken with the ingratitude of courts and princes. Women, Sir, have no respect for slobs. You catch my meaning? Your gentle, pale-faced, benevolent chap, no girl worth her salt cares tuppence for!"

Something like a chill struck on Mr. Tillotson's heart as he heard this remarkable declaration. He felt that there was a truth—very rarely found in such declarations—in what his friend had said.

"Look at Ross, too," went on Mr. Tilney, quite encouraged by the overwhelming conviction and assent that he saw in Mr. Tillotson's face. "Look at Ross. Now that it's all past, and gone, and laid by—who would not say that the present Mrs. Tillotson had a regard for him? We all of us knew it, Sir. Brought up together from that high. With all his rudeness and roughness, his follies and breakings out, we could see, Sir, with half an eye, Sir, that the pre-

sent Mrs. Tillotson had a liking for him. But that's all gone and laid by now. Curious, looking back this way on the light of old days. They come back on us, like mountains, my dear Tillotson, rolling softly, softly over one another. Man," added Mr. Tilney, buttoning himself up with devotion, "is but as a puff of smoke upon earth. Blow it, Sir, and where is it?"

Mr. Tillotson walked home that day with his eyes upon the ground, ruminating deeply. Something like a hint of his own overtrust and unsuspiciousness was in his mind, and that grotesque dictum of Mr. Tilney seemed to ring in his ears like a discordant chime —"Women never respect a *slob;*" and he felt that there was something overtrue in this. But when he got home again he heard the harmonium pealing devotionally through the house. Then he went up stairs and entered softly, and saw through the half light that devotional face, turned upwards as if praying, while again a patch of light fell upon the golden hair. It brought back to him an old evening when she was playing in the grand St. Alans cathedral, and might have been a framed St. Cecilia picture. There were images that never lost their power with him, and as he thought of this one it soothed him like a potion; the sense of perfect happiness came back on him with an overflow, and he could almost smile at his doubts. As he stole down again, not wishing to interrupt her, he met Martha Malcolm on the stairs. For her "grimness" and austerity he always had a sort of indulgence. "Listen to that, Martha," he said. "There's heavenly music."

"I hear it, Sir," she answered, "and have heard it. It's good for those as like it. There are the letters just come for you, on the table."

"Any one here to-day for me, Martha?" he asked, wishing to change the subject.

"Yes," she said, "that foreigner man who comes when ye are at office."

"No one else? Not even the Captain?"

This news disturbed him again. But there was the music still playing and working on him like a spell. Still, even for the curiosity of the thing, it was strange that she who told him every thing, even trifles he did not care to know, should keep this back from him. He gave a sigh and looked at his letters.

Two for Mrs. Tillotson—one in a bold man's hand, which he had an instinct was Grainger's; the other in Ross's writing, which he knew very well. None for him. He left them there, and turned into the parlour.

That afternoon, not an hour before her husband had returned, Mrs. Tillotson had been sitting in her drawing-room, when the grim Martha, entering with a card, asked "would she see *that* gentleman?"

Now, she had been just thinking of "that gentleman" only a few

minutes before, and it had occurred to her how foolish it was to have made any "arrangement" with such a man, and that the best course even in such a trifle was to be open. When she looked on the card and read "Mr. Grainger," she handed it back with a little impatience. "What does he mean by coming in this way?" she thought. "I am not at home. I cannot see him."

"But I told him ye *were* at home," said the other.

"I am sorry you did," Mrs. Tillotson said, gravely. "Tell him Mr. Tillotson will be in in an hour. There."

Martha went down. But came up again with another card, on which was written in pencil, "Do let me up. I wish to see you particularly. I must see you." Some colour came into her cheeks at the tone of this message. It was lucky, she thought, she had made up her mind about this free-and-easy intruder, and she sent down word again that she was engaged. This was all that had passed, and it was some pleasure that Mrs. Tillotson thought how she had thus obviated, what seemed to her, a little false step. But in the evening her letters were brought in to her; the first she opened was Grainger's. "I am sorry," it ran, "you did not see me to-day when I called. I suppose some suspicions were in your mind of the kind that I hinted to you when I last saw you. I am quite unselfish in the matter, and merely wished to speak to you, as I do now, about one in whom you have some little interest. I have been away, and on my return find that he has been leading a strange life, having 'broken out,' as I am afraid he does occasionally. I am a friend of his, and it is only to you I would speak thus of his failings. I was really shocked this morning, on my return, to see the change in him. I believe he has no money left, and seems to me—though he is too proud to own it—in actual want. He is indeed in a pitiable state. If you had seen him this morning I am sure you would have felt some compassion for him. To see him there bewailing himself, 'hunted,' he said, pursued by creditors, and literally not knowing where to lay his head or find rest. I have tried to help him a little, but what I can do is very little—I have little myself. Besides, what he wants is kindness, soothing and humouring by those he likes and respects. These fits of depression are too much for him, and I know not how to treat them. In one of these fits he left me, and I was sorry I let him go. I tried to find him again, but could not, and am really afraid he may fall into some trouble from his creditors, or may have done so already. This was what I wished to speak to you about this morning, as I believe a word from you—or a few words—would soothe and tranquillise him. I know your husband—Mr. Tillotson—could set him straight, and make him happy in a moment, and would be delighted to do it; but his name is like a piece of scarlet to Ross. Naturally you think you have reconciled him perfectly to your husband: I must tell you that this is a mistake. Here is a page from a letter of Ross's not a week old, and it speaks for

itself: 'I was with *the pair* to-day, and he played the virtuous, suffering, and Christian man to perfection. If you knew what I suffered, Grainger, during that time, with his infernal air of patronage, his fat contented superiority. I could have eaten my heart out. Curses on him, Grainger; and curses on me, too, if ever I get over it to him!' This is very shocking, and it pains me to have to show it to you; but I wish to show you that I have been quite disinterested in the matter from the beginning. I only wished to save *my* friend and yours from some fatal burst, which may, besides, bring ruin into your family. You, however, know best, and judge best."

This letter overwhelmed her. She saw all the evils that were thus hinted at as clear as if they had happened already. She had an instinct that every word of it was true; but the worst was, that Ross's letter showed her only too plainly that any exertions of her own would be useless. She had thought complacently of what had happened at that interview as having completely smoothed away everything, and now she saw that she was wrong.

What was she to do? As for telling her husband of this new danger it would be unkind and selfish, and would not help the matter. The only thing was to bear it all on her own shoulders. Grainger, she felt, had indeed hit on the truth when he said that her soothing, and only hers, could have influence with Ross.

After much thought she went to her desk, wrote a note, and sent it out. Martha Malcolm took it from the little page who was sent with it, and read that it was directed to Mr. Grainger.

Mr. Tillotson now thought it was time for him to entertain some of his brother directors magnificently, as, indeed, might be expected from one in his position. This, too, was strongly pressed on him by the secretary, who said, truly, that these things were "all advertisements," and better than advertisements. He was growing interested in the bank, too, himself, and though there was that little shadow at home, still on the whole he was very happy, and thanked God every morning for being privileged to enjoy so much undeserved happiness. Every thing would, no doubt, come right; and he had such sweetness and patience, and was ready to lay every thing to the account of his own defects or fault, that he had very soon argued himself into something like calm and acceptance of every thing that came.

This was their first entertainment. It was to be very sumptuous. "This is to be *your* feast, Mrs. Tillotson," he said to his wife, "who will you ask? We must have our friend Ross, who is behaving so well, and our dear Captain and his niece, but she will not come, and the 'great Bushell,' as they call him, and the Tilneys; and I have asked, without consulting you, Mr. and Mrs. Bunnett, great City people, and *our* people too—they will amuse you—and Mr. Snelgrove, another City man, and one or two more I should like to ask. I begin to take interest in these things. Six months ago the idea of

my giving a dinner would have been the most comical thing in the world."

"You are so kind—so good," she said; "more good to me than I deserve."

Yet when she was alone, she began thinking with a sort of dread of Ross, and how he would behave before company, and how, if he should arrive in a humour of disappointment, what a scene he might bring about. But presently came a note from him in this pleasant strain:

"DEAR TILLOTSON,—I shall be glad to feast with you, if you give us a good dinner, which of course you will. It will be, of course, a treat for a poor fellow like me to see all your state and glory. Give my respects to the charming Mrs. Tillotson.

"Yours,
"W. Ross."

She had hoped he would *not* come. Even in *this* note she saw a secret earnest of some outburst. It was, indeed, certain the lights, the flowers, the gold and silver, and all the choice evidences of their prosperity would only inflame him; and she could not bear to think that that kind, good, gentle heart, who worshipped her, should receive the least mortification in public above all.

She came to him again. "I do want some one asked to our party," she said; and the devout face was put close to his.

A delighted smile came into his face. "Now this is what I like," he said; "fill the table, don't ask me about it. Who is your friend, if you will tell me—a female confidential friend?"

She hesitated a moment. "It is Mr. Grainger," she said. "I am afraid that, unless he is there, Ross may——"

The delight fled from his face in a moment. "What is this?" he said, a little excitedly. "What does this mean?" Suddenly he checked himself, and said, coldly, "to be sure, ask whom you please—any one you like; Grainger, by all means."

CHAPTER IX.

MRS. TILLOTSON'S FIRST DINNER.

THE day at last arrived—a Monday. The grave officers of state who "attended" in the City, at Mansion House and Guildhall, were in waiting. The glories of the Egyptian Hall were what they were accustomed to, and therefore when Mr. Bowles characterised Mr.

Tillotson's party as "a little effort," he might be reasonably pardoned. These gentlemen attended almost exclusively at City banquets, and their connection lay among the entertainments of "City gentlemen." They rather looked down on the "West-end waiters," who in their turn despised the coarse sumptuousness unadorned by any of their fashionable brethren.

Mr. Tillotson was kept at his bank a little later than usual. Mrs. Tillotson at first, from the mere novelty, took some little interest in what was going on. But after a time Mr. Bowles, who had come early to have "a general hi to the 'ole," which consisted in languidly laying his head on one side, and taking slant views along the table, hinted that any assistance of the sort, however well meant, only disturbed his imagination.

A piquet of the City gentlemen was in the hall when the company began to arrive. They at once stood to their arms. No need of asking names. Mr. Bowles knew well the figure of Mr. Bunnett, the famous "Ryder, Bunnett, and Co," whose plate he had removed deftly at a hundred feasts. So too with the form of "the great Bushell," before whom he all but grovelled. After all, should adversity overtake any one of us, who are asked out to dinners, could there be a more agreeable retreat discovered, or a line of life in which we can honestly make our bread, then the carrière of a waiter in good and choice practice? We see the best of society, breathe the air of refined life, have a certain amusement in watching the manners and customs of those above us, and, what is a more costly delectation, to enjoy as a sort of perquisite, and without impeachment of dishonesty, some share of the rich meats and juices, the select wines, which are set forward for the entertainment of our betters. A reduced gentleman might find a worse occupation.

Mrs. Tillotson, soft and brilliant, yet with a little wistful and almost anxious look, stood in her drawing-room waiting for the guests. The golden hair glistened under the wax lights: an air of wonderful sweetness hung about her. Was she a little nervous about this, her first party, which, as Mr. Bowles remarked with truth, during the day, was a thing to lie on any "lady or gent's sperits, be they ever so high or so low. It always took 'im short," he said, "at the Manshun 'Us until all was well through, and his 'ed was on his bed."

First came the great Bushell, hot and raw from recent and toilsome shaving, with the coils of a white tie scattered about his throat, very broad about the waistcoat, and labouring in like a "full-bowed" fishing-smack. For a man so much at ease in finance, he was anything but at home in social life; called Mrs. Tillotson "marm," and seemed to be taking half a turn ahead or astern across the rug, with such heavy motion both of speed and tongue, that one looked for the sound of splashing paddles. Mrs. Tillotson gave him gentle welcome, which only disarranged him more. Then came Ross and

his friend—Ross more flushed and wild-eyed than usual, with cheek-bones more hot and projecting, but still with a sort of ferocious handsomeness about him. His friend Grainger came with him, submissive and quiet, and respectful as usual. But something more cheerful made its appearance in the shape of Mr. Bunnett and Mrs. Bunnett, of the City, who came in jovially, and appeared to have broken out all over into broad smiles. They came in arm-in-arm; clean, resplendent, and burnished all over. After them arrived Snelgrove, a rather ecclesiastical-looking City man; and the Captain, who had declared some days before that it was high time for him "to treat himself to a dress coat of the very tip-top fashion," just as he had treated himself to a "frock" on the occasion of the wedding. He had been very particular with the Messrs. Hardy, the eminent tailors, and had quite won on the foreman of the establishment, who, accustomed to measure lords principally, was at first inclined to treat the old soldier unceremoniously. But the Captain soon brought him round. "I've seen as fine coats turned out of this place," he said, "as in the whole course of my life. You have the true style here. You see, I'm a little spare about the ribs, and I'm afraid it'll give you no end of trouble in the fitting; but I want it for a special occasion, you see." Half the people in the place gathered round as the Captain gossiped; and when he alluded to General Cameron, who had recommended him, the operation of taking the measure became of universal interest. At the Captain's home, too, all the house knew of the coming festival, and shared in the excitement. The Captain would not have come if he could have helped it. "Surely I'll be only in the way," he said. "What business has an old spanchilled fellow like me in company? I thank you a thousand times, my dear Tillotson, but lay my cover" (an expression in favour in the days of Colonel Cameron) "for somebody else. Do now." But his friend would hear of no excuse; and it must be said that, instead of looking like "a spanchilled old fogie," as the Captain anticipated for himself, he looked like an aristocratic old officer, who, if he had been set off with a star and ribbon, would have been an ornament to any table.

In due time the company went down and sat at dinner. The gorgeous plateau and candelabra presented by the grateful shareholders glittered on the table. Mr. Bowles and his following stood behind, awfully like guards at a stage execution, but presently became galvanised into violent life and motion. The cheerful Bunnett, whose mouth distended between his collars like a gate between two white walls, chatted heartily as he settled himself to enjoy the meal. The great Bushell was still ill at ease and uncomfortable. Ross, who had "taken down" Miss Bunnett (Mrs. Bunnett was on his left, a stout vulgar woman), had a sneer as broad as Mr. Bunnett's gate on his face. His eyes were bright, and roamed over the table.

"Lovely, ain't it," said she to him—"the plattoe?"

"Exquisite," said Ross, looking at it. "That's what they gave him—superb. It makes one gasp. Don't you admire it? When will they give you or me anything of this sort? I don't say, when shall we deserve it."

Grainger had drifted up someway next to Mrs. Tillotson. Under the soft lights in the shareholders' candelabra, the golden hair was a feast to look on. Mrs. Bushell had been "taken in" by Mr. Tillotson. The Captain was next to Mr. Snelgrove, who, however, made small account of him, being apparently a sort of worshipper of Mr. Bunnett. Any thing more slavish than this almost adoration of the City man could scarcely have been conceived; and it was accompanied with a sort of pleasant badinage and rallying. Mr. Snelgrove spoke of his friend usually as "he."

"Mrs. Tillotson, I say, Mrs. Tillotson, he's a poor man, and will end in the workhouse. Were you ever down at Bulmer? It's uncommonly like a workhouse."

"Now, Snelgrove," said Mr. Bunnett, "you stop. I'll not ask you to Bulmer if you don't keep quiet. Bulmer's looking very well just now," he went on to Mr. Tillotson. "I assure you I laid out seven hundred pounds on the gardens; and I am at this moment in treaty with Lord Hobham's gardener. Not that I think he's a bit better gardener because he comes from a lord. That's rather against him."

The jackal again struck in. "Mrs. Tillotson, I should be very glad to see Bulmer, if I was let. I was only there once or twice; but now that we are getting my Lord Hobham's gardeners, I suppose I shall have no chance. It's a very poor place. No peaches, Ma'am, no nectarines, no flowers, no grapes, no rhododendrons—quite a wilderness, Ma'am. Oh yes."

Mr. Bunnett laughed heartily at this clever irony, and Mrs. Bunnett from afar off bade Mrs. Tillotson not to mind "that Snelgrove," as he was always at his joke. Then the subject glided on to something else, and Mr. Snelgrove, turning to his Captain, asked him if he had ever been down to Bulmer. About the finest show-place in England."

The Captain, who had been silent, only heard imperfectly. "Eh?" he said, full of smiles.

"Bulmer, Bulmer," said the other, in a loud tone; "every one in the kingdom knows it."

"Oh, to be sure," said the Captain, seeing that his assent was required to something, "to be sure! Fine indeed. What you may call the right sight."

"The peaches, Sir," the other went on, in the same loud tone, "are not matched by the royal fruit. Bullock has had ever so many prizes."

"Oh yes," said the Captain, with eager admiration and assent, "See that now. Wonderful."

"What became of Bullock?" said the jackal, across to his patron. "He went away, I know. Of course he wasn't good enough. I'd have thought a hothouse gardener at a hundred a year was pretty well; but that won't do, it seems, for millionaires. No, no. It's all my Lord Hobham, it seems, now."

Mr. Bunnett deprecated this attack softly. "No, no; really no. The man took airs, and I had to part with him. I would have gone on with him I assure you."

"Have you seen his picture?" Snelgrove went on, half to the table, half to the Captain, "full length in his liveryman's uniform? Nothing short of Sir Wilkins, R.A., believe me. Five hundred and fifty without the frame. You and I, poor devils, must put up with our cartes at seven and sixpence. I must say, a fine likeness."

"I say, Tillotson," Ross called to him, this gentleman is talking jocosely of *your* coming to the hammer. I dare say we shall see the testimonial put up and knocked down to a friend of the family. These things are on the cards. Banks, you know, are ever so ticklish."

He ended with a rude harsh laugh.

The soft eyes turned towards him hurriedly, and with an imploring look.

Mr. Grainger said, in a low voice, but which was distinctly heard, "Our friend Ross is in one of his malicious moods to-day. He is allowed to say what he likes here."

"Indeed he is," said Mr. Tillotson, good-humouredly; "for we are actually plaintiff and defendant in a lawsuit. But we'll have some wine together, notwithstanding."

Ross's face darkened. "I don't jest on *that*," he said slowly, "and don't mean to jest on it. I don't take any wine. They have put me on a regimen. Take it away, do you hear." (This was to Mr. Bowles, whose opinion, expressed later at a Manshun 'Us dinner, was, that he was "as ill-reggurlated a man as ever he met.")

"Regimen!" said Mr. Grainger, in a low voice to Mrs. Tillotson, "he's been keeping a regimen, indeed. It's almost lucky—though you may not think so, Mrs. Tillotson—that I am here, for he is working himself up into one of his moods. Look how he glares at your husband. He thinks he has been insulted in some way. Everything, indeed, is an insult to him now. This magnificence, the wines, the pictures, at this moment, have been all got out, 'thrust in his face,' he would call it, to make him feel. I wish I was beside him."

Piteous distress was in Mrs. Tillotson's face. She all but wrung her hands.

"I feel what you say to be true," she went on, "and every day I feel the want in myself of that power that can control others. I am wretchedly weak. Even this very afternoon some one came to our house—a wild, half-savage being—forced himself in, hunting for my

husband. Why should this happen to us? Why should Ross—for it was of *his* set, I know—expose us to this?"

A quick light came into Grainger's eyes. "What sort was this man? was he short, stout, with red rings round his eyes?"

She almost started. "Why, you know all things," she said.

"No, that was none of Ross's set. He was of your husband's set." His voice got lower. "But I have no right to speak to you of such things. I could have prevented his coming, but you would think, naturally, that I was officiously thrusting myself into all your concerns. But I may say this much, that he is a dangerous man, and it grieves me to tell you that his presence here bodes your husband some trouble. I must warn you of this."

They were so earnest in their talk, and her eyes were turned to him with such eagerness, that neither noticed that Mr. Tillotson, utterly abstracted from his neighbour's conversation, was watching them with an expression of pain that was evident to all.

"Go on, tell me more," he said. "That is, if you will so indulge me. I may be a little useful."

"No, I recollect now," she went on, "you must be wrong. For he suddenly changed and became quite deferential—that it was all a mistake, and that he only wanted a small debt that my husband owed him."

"And he changed in this way when you——This is important."

"When I——let me think. Oh, let me recollect. Yes, when he found that I knew nothing of him, or that my husband had not told me anything of him."

"Ah, there it is," said he hastily. "I see through all these little ruses. I met that man abroad, and I know him by heart. I know the whole this moment. There is some passage in your husband's life, which he——"

"No, never," she said, passionately. "You are fond of repeating that——"

"I do not know it, but I believe it. Think of that night at St. Alans, when he left your table. This man knows something of it—found that you were not in the secret, and will work upon your husband for ends of his own to keep it from you. That is the game; at least, so I read it."

The colour came to her checks. "I do not so accept it," she said. "Your theories are too ingenious, and built on too slight a foundation. This is some common man who is in want of money."

Grainger bent his head and smiled. "As you please. You won't understand me till it is too late. You will call me then, and I shall not come perhaps. What if I tell you his name, which you do not know, Mrs. Tillotson?"

"Ah! *that would* be a proof," she said.

"Eastwood," he said, in a slow distinct voice, and with his eyes steadily fixed on her.

There were other eyes, which they had not noticed, bent forward, devouring them. There was a pale face watching this whispered conversation, where the heads were bent together, almost with a sort of agony. The heavy stout lady beside him, though "making an excellent dinner," as she said herself afterwards, thought him almost "*im*polite, Bunnett," and "never so much as asked me if I had a mouth on me."

Ross, too, from afar off, had been watching also with a bitter sneer on his mouth, restless, impatient, and not attending to his neighbour. He saw the worn anxious look on Mr. Tillotson's face, and with that ill humour of his which took any victim that offered, said, half aloud, "Look at our friend's face! Just look! Tillotson, I say, are you going to eat your guests with your dinner? Are you ill? Don't he look ill now? I appeal to the ladies."

There was an unconcealed sneer and insolence in the way this was spoken. Mr. Tillotson coloured and recovered. "I am quite well," he said coldly. "Why do you say so?"

"Interest. Interest, of course," said Ross, with a laugh. "Miss Bunnett, how do you like this house? The pictures and the finery show you what banking can do. Vive the City! I say. When I am altogether run out, I think I must take to the City, and come in time to have a place like your Bully Hall, which that gentleman warms up so about."

"Bulmer is our place," said the young lady, coldly indignant.

"Well, Bulmer. I beg its pardon. I say, Tillotson, you should let out a little, and not be hoarding. This young lady says you should give a ball, and not keep up a melancholy face, as if you were ordered for execution. When he comes to sit to Huish—isn't he the swell painter?—they will say you were trying to look like Byron."

Grainger struck in in his calm voice: "You see, our friend Ross takes bitter views. The world has rubbed him a little, Miss Bunnett. He has been disappointed, and he has had a bad opinion from his lawyer to-day about that funny lawsuit we spoke of."

Ross's eyes flashed fury. "I've not," he said, angrily. "It's just the contrary. I know the parties who'll laugh the wrong side. But I see this is some of your joking that you picked up at Homburg, where they stripped you nicely, my fine friend."

The Bunnetts and other City people listened wondering, but could make nothing of what they heard. This might be the talk of high society; so they held themselves in suspense. At any rate it was time for the ladies to retire, and Mrs. Tillotson gladly rose.

When the gentlemen came up an hour later, Mr. Snelgrove was asking the Captain privately, "Who, now, could you tell me, is that man Ross? Very odd, very odd indeed."

"Ah, bless you," said the Captain, "tha''s all gagging, as we may

call it. The pair are always going on that way together—at it morning, noon, and night. A sort of quizzing, you know."

"Oh, quizzing!" said the other, doubtfully. "But I declare I thought he was in good earnest."

Mr. Grainger stole over to Mrs. Tillotson as soon as he entered. "Would you show me your new piano?" he said. "Who is the maker? I am longing to see it." And Mr. Tillotson's eyes followed them over into the next room. "We have been on a volcano since you left us," said Grainger, in a low voice. "It passes belief all we have gone through. He is losing his senses, I believe; and, though I say it, really only for me——"

"This is growing dreadful," she said, putting her hands to her face in sore distress.

"When the ladies went, his only restraint was gone. He contradicted nearly every word your husband said, and who, I must say, bore it with admirable temper. 'What can *he* know of pictures,' he said, 'who has lived in a hole of a bank all his life? Now, of course, he has come out into civilised life, but it will take time and training.' Then he went on to become worse. I am afraid he has been drinking more than he ought. At last I think your husband lost his temper, and I must say answered him with spirit. Set him down quite. You see, Ross is in a sulk. He is brooding over it."

Ross was in this state, and now came over to them. "When did you begin to take interest in pianos?'" he said. "Is that the way to attend to your guests, Mrs. Tillotson? As for your husband, he has insulted me down stairs, and, by God, he shall answer it. He thinks, because he throws his *mess* down here before me, because he gives us a glass of miserable wine that he don't know how to choose, he can treat me as he likes. Another minute, and I'd have thrown it in his face. He supposes he can insult me."

"You insulted *him*, grossly insulted him," said Grainger.

"I did *not*," said the other, fiercely. "What is it to you if I did? Look at him now, looking over here with his pious face—the sweet suffering Joseph! And to insult me before this pack of low cockneys, too! I'll have it out of him, and make him apologise on his knees, and in this very room."

"Oh, Ross, Ross," said she, in a low voice of anguish, "will nothing have any effect on you? You are making me more and more wretched every hour."

"That comes well from you," he said. "You may thank yourself for all this. Everything I do now is your own work, recollect."

Mr. Snelgrove came sidling over. "Won't we hear the instrument?" he said, gaily. "Here's Mr. Bunnett, really a judge. Ask him"—Mr. Bunnett was rolling down slowly—"ask *him* would he take a twenty-pound note for his piano—just do, for the fun of the thing. I think, Bunnett, it was twenty-five pound ten you gave for that satin-wood piano, with the gold and the carvings, eh?"

Mr. Bunnett smiled good-humouredly and modestly.

"Didn't Erard tell you," went on Snelgrove, "it was the cheapest in his shop?" Then in a low whisper to Mrs. Tillotson, "Gave five hundred for it! Saw the cheque myself."

Thus those rooms, not very large as they were, had become a whole theatre of human passions; several plays were going on together—suspense, anxiety, doubt, distrust, resentment, intrigue, *fade* conventionality, dull insensibility, and a sort of roscate complacency, that all around was smooth, conventional, and going on cheerfully.

In the midst of which Mrs. Tillotson played the music. ("They have a full Grand at Belmer," Mr. Snelgrove whispered under the back of his hand to the Captain, "that would fill a church"—news utterly unintelligible to the Captain, who thought a full grand might be a foreign officer of some kind, and said "Yes. Now have they?") When she had done, and risen softly, it had grown late. Mrs. Bunnett, between whom and Mrs. Tilney no fraternisation had taken place, was rustling her rich silk noisily. Mrs. Tillotson had risen, and was softly walking into the front room, when, at the door of the back drawing-room, a servant came in with a card on a salver. She met him so suddenly that with a sort of instinct, she took it from him.

Grainger alone saw the look of doubt and abject agony that came into her face, and saw, too, the way she crushed it up in her hand—saw, too, the hesitating way she stopped, turned back, and went on again, as if she knew not what to do. In a moment he was at her side, with a smile on his face, as if he was still speaking of the piano. In another moment Mr. Tillotson, turning restlessly, saw him take a card from her hand, then whisper something, and, with a nod of intelligence, leave the room. Down stairs, Mr. Bowles, not yet retired, said to his colleagues that it was "out of all dressin'" to have "fellers" like that coming at "unregular" hours—a feller that was there twice afore on that day to his knowledge.

They were all coming down, Mrs. Bunnett's dress rustling and crackling, like ships under a heavy sail. The Bunnetts' carriage was waiting, about which Mr. Snelgrove, pleasantly facetious to the end, would have his jest.

"You've seen, I suppose," he said to Mr. Tilney, "our friend's tumble-down old brougham which he bought second-hand? It's coming up now. And the horse, which he got cheap out of a cab. Oh, yes." But this was not so successful, for the night was dark, and the scene confused and unsuited to irony, and the "second-hand view" came naturally enough to Mr. Tilney, and did not seem so far-fetched an idea. At last they were all gone.

Now as the last carriage drove off, and Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson were standing alone in the drawing-room, Mr. Tillotson began at once

excitedly: "I cannot endure this any longer. It is too much—far too much. I have been as enduring as self-respect will allow; but there is a point beyond which we are not to go. But, at any rate, I can't do it. I can do no more. I have suffered enough as it is."

With her eyes raised from the ground, and in which there was the old irresistible devotional expression, she said: "It is quite true, indeed. Yes; such restraint is too noble."

"Yes," he said, bitterly, "too soft and foolish. It was a wonderful spectacle. You would not match it; but I am sick of it. I am not called on to make these sacrifices. What is that man to me, with the mysteries of those with him? *They* may have their reasons, but I have not, and have no connection with them. I am not to be pointed at—disgraced—as a weak, foolish creature, that any one can laugh at, for him and his friends. I have seen enough of this wretched life to-night to sicken me. But I think it high time to begin and look to myself now, in the true selfish and proud way, after looking to every one else all my life."

Now he at last looked at her who stood before him like a sweet penitent, utterly overwhelmed and miserable. The old St. Alans light seemed of a sudden to rise about, the old St. Alans music to fill.

"Oh," he said, suddenly, "forgive me! I know not what I am talking about. I am a wretched, miserable man that deserves all, all Oh, if you knew what I have suffered to-night in a *hundred* ways, you would be indulgent and pity me. But because my heart has been wrung I must vent it all on your soul. What do you think of me?"

The light of joy that came back into her face reassured him. "I talk folly and wickedness when I talk of suffering. I am only too happy—more than I deserve. And while it lasts, while you remain to me, I should be indeed content. But mind," he said, and the old doubt came back into his face, "if once *that* be taken from me, if *they succeed* in weakening the only link that brings me the joys of life, I am lost indeed. You will not let them. It is folly, but I cannot help it."

Now came in Mr. Bowles to look after the lights. The impression in his mind was that the host and hostess were talking with delight on the successful way in which everything had "gone off," and were overpowered with satisfaction at the glimpse they had had of "Manshun 'Us" festivities. A good deal of the success, he thought, might be set down to his exertions: and he thought it rather ill-bred that no acknowledgment—often made affably at the "Manshun 'Us" by the Lord Mayor himself—had been tendered on this occasion. But host and hostess were so selfishly absorbed in discussing the feast for their own glorification, that they took no notice of Mr. Bowles, which, as that gentleman said the fol-

lowing evening at a real City dinner, "was only the way of the world."

Thus closed a day which was the beginning of the working out of a strange change in that house.

CHAPTER X.

A MEETING.

Now after Mr. Tillotson's City dinner, the scene of their life moves on with a sort of monotony. But that morning seemed to have been the last of the bright unclouded days which had set in for him, and about which he had such a distrust. Those who knew him began to remark the backward motion, and saw, with pain, the clouds beginning to gather again.

She had passed a troubled night, from many reasons. Before morning the conviction had grown upon her strongly that some evil was advancing on them, and that this old mystery, so often pointed to and hinted at, might now be brought to light with danger and perhaps disgrace. Else what did it all mean? We hear men accuse themselves passionately, and tell us they are guilty sinners; but over such declaration always seems an air of exaggeration from penitence, or modesty perhaps. But it is different when other men make the charges. It sounds more practical and serious. Something, too, that Grainger had said to her once before, came back on her very often. "And did he not tell *you* at the time of the marriage? No, of course not. That you could scarcely ask *him*." And putting all together,—his gloom, the strange hints he had thrown out so often, —it was not unnatural that she should begin to feel a little curiosity as to what the shape of this strange secret might be. And from that night a sort of weight began to oppress her, as if this might turn out to be some dreadful and destructive mystery, which when disclosed would be their ruin.

When she was sitting in her drawing-room thinking a little sadly over these things, Mr. Tillotson entered a little abruptly. He was just going off to his office. His old gentleness had come back. "That was a miserable night last night, and I was fretful and hasty. But I could not endure such another. Do be indulgent and pity me; but I have not the moral strength, I think. I am sure you will think I am right, we cannot have *him* coming here again, or any of his friends. I have done all I could, and can do no more."

Sweet comfort and pity came into her face; and she answered at once: "He behaved cruelly, unkindly, wickedly. No, you will

never see him any more. Indeed, I could not ask you. You have been too kind."

"I?" he answered hastily. "I have never wished to see him but for your sake. What I mean is, he must not come to this house, or be seen here. I cannot endure his insolence; it is torture, and will drive me to something. I *must* ask you to agree to this. Indeed, it is not much; and only due to our own dignity."

"To be sure," she said. "And he shall never enter it; though——" And she stopped suddenly and looked down; for at that moment rushed on her all the dangers of such an exclusion, and the fury which such a step would work him up to. "I think," she said, hesitatingly, "just as yet, while he is in this state, and we are the only people who have influence with him——After all, he is not naturally wicked, and Mr. Grainger *has* some power."

Mr. Tillotson looked at her a moment with a strange expression; then suddenly turned away. "It was not much to ask," he said, with a bitter and wounded tone. "I only can say what I wish. You can, of course, do what you please. My wish is that he be never admitted into this house again. That, of course, does not concern you."

"What does this mean?" she said with soft reproach; "what change is this coming on? Dearest husband, this is for *you*."

"Change!" he said, "there is no change. I only go back to my old state, the state it was folly for me to have given up. I say again, I do not wish that man or his friend to be seen here again. You are free, and can do as you wish."

"Any thing you please," she said.

As soon as he had gone out, she again sank down into her old meditativeness. The difficulties of the situation all came back upon her again. There was this dangerous man, who had come last night, and would come again of a certainty, and embitter her husband's life. Grainger might for a time keep him away; but she more and more recoiled from having recourse to his assistance.

Another day went slowly by in a sort of dreamy irresolution, until towards the afternoon Martha stood before her. "That gentleman's below again," she said. "The gentlemen visitors are coming in plenty these days."

This woman had a sort of privilege, and these grim speeches were but a part of herself. But Mrs. Tillotson had an instinct who this was. "I cannot see him—see *any* one," she said. "Send him away."

She shook her head. "He will not go for *me*," she said. "The best way were not to let them come."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Tillotson," said a voice at the door. "You will excuse me, I know; but recollect that this was part of our arrangement last night. I was at your party, and they

treated me like a servant. If I went away *then*, it was only to put the matter off till this morning. Now *you* can go down," he said, turning to Martha. "What are you waiting for?"

He took a chair, then closed the door and sat down by her. "Now," he said, "let us see our way, and let us understand each other. Dear me, how charming old England is, after all; and old London, too, above all! Only think how it must seem to a town man after fifteen years among their wretched mangy foreign places. How sick I have been of them, pining literally to get back here! But what could I do?"

She looked at him wondering.

"Ask your husband the reason. He is accountable for it all, and for much more. If I had come home all that time, I should have come home a beggar; for a little allowance that was made me by a cruel mother would have been withdrawn if I had. Only fancy, an elder son, John Eastwood, of Eastwood, 'cut off,' as they call it, with two hundred a year, and his whole fine estate handed over to a younger brother; all of which madness I owe to *your* husband."

"What does all this mean?" she said, half rising. "Why do you speak to me in this way? I do not want to listen to you. You wish to assume some power over us——"

"Well, if you like," he said, rising, "I shall go straight to his bank; it will be more profitable to me, and less pleasant to you. And if you have ever heard of such a thing as a skeleton in a cupboard, I vow to heaven your husband will bring you to-day from his bank a skeleton, the match of which you'll not find in London. On my honour, I am serious—a skeleton that will stay with you in the house until your dying day. Give your orders, Mrs. Tillotson. I am a gentleman by birth and education, and don't want to hector or terrify you, or make terms like a vulgar ruffian. But as I live and breathe—and on my solemn honour, what I tell you is true—and that is true, it will be the most miserable day in your new married life if I go to the bank now, and even let myself be seen by Tillotson. There."

There was such earnestness in what he said, that it brought conviction, but with a chill.

"But what is all this about?" she said, in a mournful voice. "What is this secret?"

He shook his head. "Seriously," he said, gravely and respectfully, "it would not do to tell you. You would not wish it yourself. You see, the whole is in a mess; but I cannot help it. I have had a miserable time. I have been ruined through the business and through him. As I say, I was born and bred a gentleman, and I don't want to have the looks of extorting, and having 'silence purchased,' and that sort of thing. But what can I do? As it is, I am doing wonders, for me. I suppose, if I walked to him straight,

it would be the best course for me. But I don't want to make or bring confusion. I must live. If something moderate is got for me, I shall be quite content, which, recollect, all this time is *a debt;* for it was he and *his business* that brought ruin on me, and it is fair that he should make up for it. In fact, I have behaved with the greatest delicacy all through. In fact, I thought for years that he had become only a poor clerk in a bank. Judge of my astonishment when I heard that he was a regular millionaire and rolling in wealth. Well, now, to business, Mrs. Tillotson. What can you do for me?"

A strange curiosity came on, arising out of his preamble. "If we are to do this, tell me, at least, what you are speaking of. What is this secret—this mystery? It is best I should know it. It will be a more miserable skeleton for me if I should not. I make *that* a condition."

He looked at her a moment. "Far better for you not. Take my advice—reflect. They tell me you are an attached couple—domestic and all that. Once distrust gets in, or a lower estimate—now think——"

She said again, with a sort of flutter, "I still wish to know; it is better that I should."

He got up, went over to the door softly, looked out, and came back hurriedly.

Later Mr. Tillotson came home, and the cold formal ride took place. During it, with some constraint and confusion, she said: "I know you are so good to me always, and so indulgent, you never refuse me. I have been very extravagant—no, not that—but I am going to be very extravagant, and I would have you to help me—will you?"

Some of the old pleasure came into his face. "I am delighted," he said, "that you come to me in this way. This is what I like. When we get home, we shall settle how large it shall be; and to-morrow we shall drive to the bank together."

But as he rode, and before they got home, he grew silent. He was always all but thrusting money on her, and nothing so delighted as the rare occasion when she had come to him. But it was only two days ago that she asked him, and now she asked again. And over this he began to grow silent and to brood; and by the end of the ride, when he was lifting her off her horse, he had built on it a whole mountain of suspicion, and, sadly converted, what he had hailed with a sort of delight had become a fresh source of disquiet.

Just before dinner she came in to him. "If you could spare it to me now," she said, with a smile. "I have heard you quote some Latin about *bis dat.*"

"To be sure," he said, fetching out his cheque-book. "How much?"

"A great deal," she said, "a very great deal. I am ashamed to name it."

"Nonsense," he said, writing. "Is not every thing I have yours? you *know* that. This," he said, looking at her, "is some pressing fellow, or Madame Adelaide. Why do you let them press you?"

"No," she said hastily; "this is a private little extravagance—a secret, a very great secret. We all have our little debts, or, I mean, expenses."

He then said abruptly, "How much?"

"Well, then," she said, "a very great deal, I fear. Would a hundred——"

He filled it in. "There," he said. "Surely you know," he added, gravely, "there is no complaint in these matters, or should not be. With an income like ours, you are *entitled* by right to your share, without coming to me in this way. And observe, don't suppose for a moment that I wish to know how you spend it. I have no right or title in the world. There, so recollect that. The bank is your bank as well as mine."

She hung her head. "Oh, if you knew, dear husband," she said, then stopped irresolutely.

His face lit up. "Ah," he said, "this is for some of your good noble charities. That secret angelic work of yours, which I know of old. To be sure; forgive me. But——"

She shook her head. "No, I cannot let you think that," she said, and she went away. She heard his deep sigh.

Presently she came back. "I had forgot; it is too late now. The banks are all closed, and this cheque can be of no use to-night."

"What," he said, a little bitterly, "is it so pressing as that?"

"I want it to-night," she said desperately. "I do indeed. Forgive me for this, but——"

"Forgive you," he said—"forgive you, my dear! How strangely you talk, for wishing to have gold instead of a cheque. Nonsense; we can send out and have it cashed somewhere," and he rang the bell. But all the shops were closed.

Sitting below in his study, he did very little business that night. Towards nine he found his lamp growing dim, and rang the bell for his servant. The study door was opened by Martha. "Take this lamp away," he said, a little pettishly. "None of you mind your work. Look at the way it is burning. Stay, why didn't *he* come up?"

"The mistress," she answered, solemnly, "had sent him out of a message, and with a letter. She was most particular about it, as there was money——"

"I see," said he, then paused. Then very irresolutely, and with

an affectation of displeasure, "and where has he gone at this time of night?"

He waited anxiously for the answer.

"To the Captain's. The Captain sent here twice this evening."

"Ah! I see," he said—not to Martha—but in reference to something that he said himself,—"I see; perfectly too."

(What he saw was, that the Captain never wanted money for himself, and would have died rather than have asked it, except from a man like General Cameron. Therefore the Captain was useful as an agent.)

Martha went on. "Indeed, we had company enough here today. A strange gentleman that sat near an hour."

"Mr. Grainger?" he said, eagerly.

"No, no," she said, "but a friend of his, and the Captain was here with him. Very pretty goings on, while the master's at the bank."

"Martha!"

"Ah! she, the poor little soul that they put to rest in the heathen country, there was no trouble of *that* sort with her. Ah! if *she*'d been understood properly; but she wasn't, and it's too late now. There's Watson back. He's been away an hour."

"Send him to me."

Watson came, and took the lamp with all respect and many excuses. He'd have sent the groom, but the mistress was so particular. And the Captain had to write a letter, which he asked him to leave, and be very careful of, which he had done; "as I knew, Sir, you wished the Captain to be obliged in every thing. Then the Captain had written another letter for the mistress."

"You did quite right, Watson," said Mr. Tillotson. "Leave it here. She will be down herself."

It was not a letter, only a scrap of paper half twisted up. It was in his hand; and, indeed, it all but unfolded of itself. There was, besides, the legal fiction of husband and wife "being one," and the moral rule of their "having no secrets" from each other. There was no question of "breaking the seal" or "opening a letter."

It was a very short struggle. He rang the bell, and sent it up to her.

The note which the Captain had written was to the following effect:

"My dear,—It's all right. I told you I was the boy for the business. He has taken the hundred and fifty, and is off to the country. —Yours, T. D."

Thus, some two or three weeks more went by, and the cloud

deepened all the while over that house. Mr. Tillotson's face began to draw back every day nearer and nearer to the old dreamy gloomy pattern, to the infinite concern of his friends. The uncharitable said "something was going wrong with the bank;" others could make nothing of it, and said he was always an odd being.

Meantime they went their usual round of life. A wistful look had come into *her* face, but they went out together, to the festivities given in honour of so important a being as the head of the great bank. And in due time arrived a sort of lord mayor's card from Mrs. Bunnett, announcing that that City lady would be "At Home," with "Dancing," in a few days.

A morning or two before this solemnity had come round, Mr. Tillotson had said to his wife in his gentle voice, "We must go, of course. It will amuse you, and I hope you will make a fine show there, and that you have a splendid dress."

"You are too kind to me," she said, softly. "But I am well provided; too well." She stopped irresolutely, and came up to him. "I have done something wrong," she said, "and you are angry with me. But I did not mean it; indeed, no. We were so happy, but now——"

"You," he said, sadly. "No. I have not complained, have I? No; you are everything that a good wife could be. I have no right to say a word."

"Ah, but you are changed! I see you are, and you have some reason which you will not tell; and yet I declare solemnly, as I stand here, that I know of nothing, unless, indeed, that unfortunate Ross—— But if you only knew——"

The hard look came to his face again. "Have I made any complaint?" he said. "I repeat, you are everything a husband could wish. Could you ask for a handsomer testimonial?" he added, trying to smile. "No; I am odd, strange, eccentric, given to humour—now in good spirits, now the reverse. *You* have an equable turn of temper, to be envied. That is a blessing; but it is my misfortune and fault."

She was going with a deep sigh, when he called her back softly. "Now," said he, "about this ball. You must be splendid. It is my glory to see you 'got up,' as they call it, as well as others, and eclipsing others. It is a delight and a pride for me, as you must know. So to oblige me," he added, taking his cheque-book, "you must have this." And he began to "fill in" rapidly.

She knew what he said was true, and that this was one way to please and oblige him. So she only thanked him, with that devotional grace and warmth which almost affected him as with pain. She was overpowered with his "munificence." It was for two hundred; a "little bonus," as he called it.

It was the day of the Bunnett ball, in the afternoon, when Mr. Tillotson was at the bank, and she had ordered her carriage expressly

to visit Madame Adelaide and "fit on" something that would do honour to his kindness. She heard a step on the stair, and Mr. Tilney, an unfrequent visitor now, came in hurriedly.

"My dear child, here's a business," he said. "I saw the carriage at the door, but I knew you were in. I declare I don't know what we are coming to, or where the world is going to end!" And Mr. Tilney dropped into a chair and looked round with a really worried and hopeless expression.

She asked him calmly, "What is it, dear father? I am prepared for anything."

"What is it?" repeated he; "what should it be? The old quarter, you may be sure! That fellow Ross, that disgrace to us all, who'll end on the gallows—mark my words! on the gallows tree—as sure—as sure as you spell my name with a T."

She turned a little pale. "And what has happened now?"

"What has happened now?" again repeated Mr. Tilney. "God help us all, but the times are all sadly screwed out of joint, screwed out of joint? What has he done? — disgraced us, ruined us all, pointed the unerring finger of scorn as we go by. Only think, a gentleman, and a gentleman's son, dragged away by common bailiffs to a common sponging house. No effects, no assets, nothing to meet the law, and then writes to me telling me to send him—let me see," added Mr. Tilney, taking a letter out of his pocket to be strictly accurate, "one hundred and ninety-eight pounds ten shillings (one ninety-eight ten), to satisfy the detainer and costs. Yes, satisfy the detainer," added he with great unction. "Why, he must be gone clean, stark, staring mad, to write such a thing to me." So, indeed, it would seem, from what we know of Mr. Tilney already.

"Poor unfortunate, miserable Ross," said she with sympathy, "always from one misfortune to another; what *is* to become of him?"

"You know, my dear, the idea of coming to me was ludicrous—simply ludicrous. I laughed when I read — I with all *my* claims. Not to be thought of. But the idea flashed on me at once like an injunction. You and Tillotson were obviously the quarter from which relief should come. And see," added Mr. Tilney, in a ruminative way, "see the delicacy of the fellow after all. He had a natural repugnance to trespass on his old flame; and as for Tillotson I can quite understand his not thinking of him. Oh, take him for all in all, we must admit that Ross has something of the gentleman in his veins!"

"But how can I help him?" she said distractedly. "Where can I get so much money? I cannot ask him; no, I cannot. He has given me money to-day already. Indeed, no."

Mr. Tilney smiled with great satisfaction. "See how things fall out. Not a sparrow, you know, but without some design of its heavenly Father. There you are, you see, like a miracle."

"But this was for a particular purpose," she said. "Dear father, you don't see the difficulty."

"Well, devote this money to him, and get more for the particular purpose. I know Tillotson; *I'll* answer for him. He is munificent in his ideas — absolutely. Just go to him and tell him the whole, or shall I?"

Long she thought it over. There was deep pity in her heart for this unhappy, most miserable being, whose days seemed doomed to misfortune, and for whose misfortunes she herself was not a little accountable. At last she came to a resolve; she could not resist any longer; and she thought it a duty to send what she had. Later, she could mention it to her husband—in a week, say. She sent away her two hundred pound cheque to the direction given her by Mr. Tilney.

Madame Adelaide had surpassed herself. As Mrs. Tillotson stood in her drawing-room, one of the most brilliant figures that could be conceived, her dress rich with tulle and laces, and lit up with the faint colouring of a delicate mauve ribbon — there were diamonds which nestled in the bouquets of tulle; and above the gorgeous golden hair was reflected softly and richly in the glasses of the room —no wonder Mr. Tillotson looked at her with admiration, then said with a sort of pride: "This is what I wished you to do;" then sighed deeply. "You have put that little sum to the best uses; you must come to me to-morrow again. You do not ask *half* enough."

Suddenly she clasped her hands. "Oh, then, if you would! *I* do not want it so much, but——"

His face grew cold and contracted. "We shall be late," he said, "and the carriage is waiting."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BUNNETT BALL.

Mrs. Bunnett's ball was "done in really first-class style," as one of her friends described it. The house was in a Bayswater square, built specially for Bunnett by a City architect, who had "turned out" many an insurance office and warehouse with the "true palatial effect;" that is, once conceding that great surfaces of plate glass, and abundant carvings, and a series of architectural sentry boxes, make up the ideal of palatial effect. The house was sumptuous, with gardens and a porch and a showy greenhouse full

of the rarest plants, "brought special from Bulmer," as the friend Snelgrove took care to tell everyone. The staircase was of white marble, and the house was full of statues and pictures. Though, indeed, Mr. Bunnett might have got both, and perhaps *did* get them, as he did his other goods, "per invoice," for the labour involved in connoisseurship and choosing "did not pay." On this night the house was lit up from top to bottom, and the pretty sort of lantern which was on the top of the stairs was lit up in a "ravishing" manner. Everywhere along the stairs and passages were the exotics from Bulmer. Part of the garden had been "taken in," covered over with an awning, lit with Chinese lanterns, and literally piled with plants and flowers "from Bulmer." As you came up stairs or went down, and met the City gentlemen with the City ladies on their arms, the conversation, flagging a little as it sometimes did, recovered animation by an allusion to the shrubs "got up from Bulmer." An alcove had been thrown out from the windows, all but masked by profuse shrubbery from Bulmer; and here, apparently as from a grove, came the strains of "Vöst's" band, the sad and winding valse, the brisk galop, and the more measured quadrille. It was remarkable about these melodies that they were all from the inspiration of "Vöst" himself, his musicians apparently not being able to deal with other music.

Now came in Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson; the City exquisites, some of them of a rich Jewish tone in their faces, turning to study the brilliant lady who stood there. Excellent foils, indeed, were the stout, magnificent, but vulgar City dames who herded together. Mr. Bunnett came to meet them with a little pride; for they were a link between West and East ends. The heavy yellow hair of Mrs. Tillotson glistened in the lights, and the little tinge of sadness in her face added to her beauty. But for such men as Mr. Bunnett, who were well-meaning and good-natured, she always had a sort of charity.

"You must show me your charming rooms," she said kindly. "I hear everything is done with such wonderful taste."

Mrs. Bunnett, had she been by, would have preferred a compliment to the lavish magnificence of everything. As it was, Mr. Snelgrove was close behind.

"Poor Bulmer," he said. "Mrs. Tillotson, I suppose he hasn't left a twig in it. It's a howling wilderness at this moment, stripped right and left. I suppose to-morrow he couldn't find a single geranium leaf. Eh? You know it's true, Bunnett."

That gentleman smiled at this flattery. "There's enough left to get you a *booky*, Mrs. Tillotson. I declare I'll send down to Bulmer to-morrer—no trouble, I assure you, for the people *must* come with the vans and things to take all this back to Bulmer."

"Show her the pictures, Bunnett," said his friend, "and the statue of Calypso, by Woodman. An order, wasn't it?"

"Yes, I gave him the order," said Mr. Bunnett, with pride "and told him to fix his own price."

("Fifty-seven ten and six," said Mr. Snelgrove. "Eh? Mrs. Tillotson. Too much, wasn't it?"

Mr. Bunnett looked alarmed, for this figure was injudiciously chosen for ironical purposes, and by the ignorant might be taken for truth; so he added, hastily, "I gave him my own cheque for nine hundred and fifty, and the pedestal brought it up to a thousand. I can tell you it was a compliment to me. I have reason to know at this moment I could get double the money for it." *

The great Bushell was there, looking like an overgrown butler. He was principally in a corner all the night, with some members of the board. "I go out to parties for business," he said, with a fair attempt at epigram, "and go to the office for pleasure." He had a "great thing coming out;" and which he was hinting at all the night. It was seen by his face that he was hugging himself over this secret, and great exertions were made to extract it from him. He was implored, beseeched. A Jewish friend or two became almost pathetic. At last, in a corner, he consented to hint at a sort of outline. At Madrid, a scheme had been formed for a central railway station. Daring companies were to bring all the lines together in a focus, and "a concession" had been secured, but this was all "dark" it would be understood. His society, the Universal Railway Roofing Company, were to have the job — a roof that would make all men gasp. Seven railways were to meet, the whole to be in the form of a star-fish or fan. So many thousand tons of iron to be employed. A government guarantee was in treaty; but that, on the whole, would rather hamper them. The thing was, which company was to "bring it out." One, whose name he imparted under the back of his hand, were making stupendous offers; but then he felt that *he* —though not the Universal Railway Roofing Company—was bound more or less to the Foncier. However, they could talk of that again.

The night, meanwhile, was speeding on. Supper had set in, which was another field of display for magnificence. Snelgrove's voice was heard in the crowd that was battling to get to the table. "Those pheasants *all came* up from Bulmer this morning. D'ye see that melon; it's not a pumpkin, I can assure you. *He* got that up from Bulmer—grapes, everything you see, all from Bulmer." But to the proprietor his tone was in the old disparaging style. "I suppose *he* was down at the markets himself yesterday, trying to pick up a bird or two—a bargain, you know. Look, Mrs. Henwitcher, look at those peaches. He knows a lord or two in the country, and

* At the sale, many years afterwards, "Woodman's Calypso," "so justly admired," said the catalogue, brought about double the ironical value set on it by Mr. Snelgrove, viz. about a hundred and twenty pounds. The dealers present said it was "a poor thing."

he gets me to write to them when he gives a party, to beg a few peaches or so. He can't afford a hothouse at Bulmer *as yet*, you know. Ha! ha!"

Mrs. Henwitcher was delighted. "Go along," she said. "Why, he 'ave 'ot'ouses; you know you 'ave, Mr. Bunnett."

"Oh, nothing to speak of; very small. Now this I have got, a first-rate gardener, who came to me from Lord——"

"Get me some pheasant," said she, "like a good creetur. I want to taste the Bulmer birds. 'Entwitcher told me he never see such a lovely place as Bulmer. Never."

"We must get you down there, Ma'am," said Mr. Bunnett, graciously. "We have a little wall-fruit and a few flowers. Bless me, there are the Tillotsons going."

They were, and were paying their adieus; Mr. Tillotson with some little exhilaration in his face. He had overheard some of the admiration excited by his beautiful wife. He had watched her figure as it moved through the room. He had seen the young officers asking to be introduced to her. He was a little proud; and as every fresh homage was paid to her, he had seen that brilliant face turned towards *him*, as if wishing that *he* should have his share in all.

As they were getting into the carriage, he said to her:

"I was indeed proud of you to-night. You looked divine."

As they entered the house, Martha came to him with "Mr. Ross has been here twice;" news that brought a sort of chill to both their hearts. Before the hall door was closed, they heard hasty steps and Ross came tramping up into the hall. He had been walking up and down the street, waiting for them to come in. It was about half-past one in the morning. He was wild-eyed as usual and his face was flushed.

"Now," said he, "Tillotson, I have met you at last, after a couple of hours' wait. Come into the parlour. I must speak a word to the *happy pair* before they retire."

"I can't see you," said Mr. Tillotson, in a voice trembling. "You have no right to come into this house. I warned you already."

"Go, go," said she, imploringly. "Why do you come here in this way?"

"To see *him*," he said, pointing fiercely, "and to tell *him* that I want none of his compliments or his infernal patronising or pauper relief, and that I despise it, and that I won't *have* it. *That's* what I've come for."

She turned very pale now. Mr. Tillotson looked at him, then at her.

"I say," he went on, in a louder voice, "I shall *not* have it. How dare you attempt it? I know the game and the policy of it —to make me helpless by '*loading me with* favours.' The good and the just man! But I won't *have* your clemency or help. I

despise it. And I tell you, Tillotson, to your face, it's shabby, *mean*, contemptible, and despicable, to try and get such an advantage over me in my misfortunes."

"What does this mean?" said Mr. Tillotson, sadly, and turning to his wife. "What am I to do with this endless persecution?"

She said nothing, but stood there overcome, overpowered, and with her hands clasped, and eyes cast on the ground.

"I fling it back," said Ross, stamping furiously. "One more week, and the courts shall have decided for me. Yes. I *know* it. Yes, I'll foil you *that* way—you and your patronising of me, as if I was a common *pauper* that you were relieving. What a charitable lord to come and release me from jail! I can tell *you*, I had loads of friends that would have done as much—and more! After all, it's not very much to lie under the weight of an obligation for a week, *for a wretched two hundred pounds!*"

Mr. Tillotson started. "Two hundred pounds!" he exclaimed. Then his eyes lit up. "Ah! what is this?" he said, turning to Mrs. Tillotson. "Could it be? So is this what you have done?"

In dreadful agitation she ran to him, almost sinking down before him. "Oh, forgive me," she said. "I meant to explain it, and I can explain it all. He was in misery, they told me—arrested—and I dare not ask you——"

He smiled bitterly. "*Dare* not ask me! It only wanted that! But why make any business of this?" he said calmly; and turning to Ross: "You see now I am quite innocent in the matter? There is the benefactress and liberator you have to thank. I knew nothing of it."

Ross looked from one to the other with fierce eyes, then burst into one of his loud laughs. "This is flattering," he said. "My dear, sweet cousin is true to me, after all. So it was you, was it? Oh, this is getting rich. I am *very* glad to hear it. With all your arts and tricks, Tillotson, you haven't turned her against me yet. No, nor never shall. And you know you made a mistake, my boy, and stepped in where you had neither law nor right to step in. And now it's coming against you, my boy. My dear child, God bless you for your humanity, and taking me out of jail, like St. Paul, and our poor Tillotson all in the dark the whole time!" And he pointed to him, and again laughed his harsh laugh.

But Mr. Tillotson did not hear or heed him. *His* eyes were upon that pale and shrinking figure, that seemed to sink more and more to the earth every instant.

"I may go now," said Ross. "By the Lord, this was worth walking up and down the street for! It was indeed! It's a weight off my mind too. 'Pon my soul, I couldn't have slept, thinking I owed *you* such an obligation. But with *her* it is different. Recollect, my boy, pledged to me from a child—*my* property, waiting *my* time and place—letters, my friend, letters that you, my boy,

never got or never saw, and then *you* come with your melancholy madness, and step in shabbily when I am far off. Serve you right! Serve you right! Reap as you sow, my friend. Good-night!"

He was at last gone, and that scene ended. From that night (and the night of Mr. Bunnett's ball was long talked of in the City, and the presence there of "an uncommonly fine young woman whom Tillotson had just married, and with whom he was as happy as a king—'Gad, my boy, you or I would change places with him!")—from that we may conceive what a widening gulf there was between husband and wife. She had sunk down before him, and in those musical accents had protested to Heaven that it was for *his* sake that she had concealed that little matter, and for no other reason in the wide world. And this explanation he had accepted with the mournful acceptance that was habitual to him. He had lost confidence, and with confidence he had lost everything. To that night (the night of Mr. Bunnett's ball, when everything came up from Bulmer) both husband and wife looked back with a sort of shuddering. Meanwhile Ross's news was almost correct, and the great Appeal Case was to be presently decided—not in a week, as he had said, but in about three weeks' time.

CHAPTER XII.

THE APPEAL TO THE LORDS.

THE "appeal case" of Ross *v.* Davis was, indeed, at last "ripe" for hearing. After being tried by "intelligent" jurors, argued by careful counsel, tried by "upright" and "learned" judges, and tested by the grand principles of the British law—after being "heard" by twelve or thirteen trained judges—sagacious, clever, and the very abstractions of sense and wisdom—it was now to be submitted to the highest tribunal of the land. "The Appellate Jurisdiction, Sir," says the native-born Briton, explaining his institutions to the foreigner, "final, irrevocable, and we might say almost infallible!" That is to say, the labours of comparative youth, sagacity, wisdom, and learning were to be submitted to three old gentlemen, very much worn out, whose presence there was almost accident, who need not attend unless they please, and who after a long life of weary days and more weary nights, have at last made this secure port, all gorgeous with gilding, where they might hope to ride at anchor after so many storms. British law being, as we are told, the perfection of human wisdom, this appellate jurisdiction

becomes the capital and crowning point of that perfection, and we need only take up "McKillop's House of Lords' Cases," and see whole monuments of juridical decision after this pattern.

The old gentlemen had not yet arrived, and that golden chamber, glittering so gorgeously and æsthetically, where, with very little extra preparation, High Mass might have been sung at any moment, was in possession of only a few loungers. It seemed like a gorgeous lantern, whose panes were filled in with stained glass. Yesterday the appeal had been "on;" the late Attorney-General, now become Lord Belhanger, of Belhanger, and his round full cheeks, glistening even to stickiness—under his great wig, had heard all the arguments.

Ross had been present in the little pew close to the bar, biting his nails impatiently, chafing, stamping, and beating the rail of his prison, as if it were the bar of a cage. He saw that the Chancellor was not "with him," and he glared at him as if he would spring out and finish him. His solicitors were by him, a little moody and impatient too, auguring mischief, and specially impatient with their client. At times he would go out and get fresh air in the great hall outside, where he would be seen pacing angrily, and muttering to himself, "I'd like to catch that old stuffed cockatoo in a dark place. Now it is easy for him to lisp and be impudent perched on his soft woolsack. I'd like to roll his round face in it until he choked." Then he would come back again, and perfectly scandalise his advisers by his behaviour in that sacred presence. It was now the morning for the judgment. Ross was there half an hour before the time, with a very wan and haggard face and very bright eyes. The solicitors were there with a very ominous manner.

"You would not take advice," they said. "Whatever turns up now is on your own head. No client ever had such chances. It's too late now, and we must only go through with it."

"And pray isn't that what I have always said?" asked Ross, insolently. "Are you trembling for your costs? By George, now you will be 'stuck' if it goes wrong. I could almost laugh. I'd give something handsome to see your faces. It would serve you right, too, for you have bullied me enough between you, God knows. But I think we shall pull through after all. I am sure of it. Don't you think so? Come, give a poor devil of a client some comfort!"

"Hush, hush!" said Mr. Dawkins, shocked at such language in such a place. "This is very bad, Sir. This is not the way to do things."

"There, they are coming in."

Yes, they were coming in, the Chancellor pink-faced and glistening ("beautifully shaved," said some one) pinching his lips as if he had a chocolate drop between them, and the two or three stout old gentlemen in rather shabby old suits. It was indeed like an empty cathedral. In the whole place there was not half a dozen. Even the counsel, except a junior or two, were not there; and Ross, with

grinding teeth, heard a gay young barrister (with a bag heavy with law books) show in a party of ladies for a moment, and lead them away with the remark, "No interest—not worth waiting for. Only a trifling case."

He did not see the scowl that Ross followed him with. "I'd like," said the latter, "just to walk after him, and beat his impudent face with his own bag, and before his ladies too."

It was a very short matter. There were only three. The tall yellow lord gave his reading of it. He had no doubt on the matter. The case had deserved all the attention it had received, and certainly *prima facie* it would seem that a view which had been so carefully adopted, first, by a jury, then by that eminent tribunal below, would be the right view. In that view he concurred, &c.

"He is with us breast high," whispered Mr. Dawkins with great alacrity.

"What did I tell you?" said Ross, whose breath was coming and going. "You unbelieving lot. Ah! my head is worth the whole gang's."

"Hush, hush!" said Mr. Dawkins angrily.

Then came the stout lord's. His merely was a sentence—a mumble, perhaps—and he was done.

Mr. Dawkins stood with his hand to his ear trying to catch it.

"What's that? What did he say?" asked Ross almost aloud.

Mr. Dawkins, without taking down his hand or looking at him, angrily jerked him with his elbow, and whispered a counsel.

"What did he *say?*" said Ross angrily. "D—n you! Will you speak?"

Mr. Dawkins gave him a ferocious look. "He's against us, and so will be this one too. It's all up."

The Chancellor had begun in his low sweet monotone. It was one of the most extr-a-ordinary cases that could be conceived, not on account of the subject-matter, which would not too severely try the powers of *even* a county court judge, but on account of the inconceivable perversions which seem to have directed the em-i-nent persons who had to deal with the matter. Those eminent persons, he was obliged to say, had been all astray in the views they had taken, and, almost as a matter of course, he should be under the necessity of ordering a revision of the whole proceedings. In short——

At this point something of the truth seemed to be breaking in on Ross. He looked from the Chancellor with a miserable air of doubt and uncertainty to his agents. "*What's* he saying?" But the faces of these gentlemen were growing darker and darker. Something like baffled fury was in Mr. Dawkins's face. He did not even answer the question, for Ross in a few moments would almost cease to be his client. It was like the change in the position of a criminal after verdict and sentence. But Ross did not accept this view.

"Have you no tongue in that infernal head of yours? If you don't speak, I'll expose you before the whole place."

Mr. Dawkins's partner rose hastily, and taking his client by the arm, led him away. "It is all up with you," he said. "The Chancellor is against you."

Ross was aghast, and stared at him a little wildly. But he did not follow as yet. "I know that, of course; but he hasn't——"

"I tell you it is the other. It is final now; and I give you warning, you had better make us out some of our costs at once. We can't afford to be out of our money any more."

"I won't believe it," said Ross wildly. "Why, it's ruin. I may as well go into the union. Do they call this law and justice? Where's the verdict and the judgment of that court? What does it mean?"

They were coming out now. The judgment was over. They had actually "opened" a new case. "You'd better get home now," said the lawyer, "and make us out money as quick as you can. It's only fair to tell you we can't wait. You know you wouldn't take advice. It is on your own head, my good Sir. What can make up to us for our trouble and protracted annoyance for so many years? It's an infernal shame, and I don't know that we won't have our action against you. "You'd better see," he added in a very menacing way, "and fetch out the money somewhere and at once, for you'll find we're not the men to play tricks with."

With a face full of alarm and fury, Ross was about to give way to his anger, when he saw Mr. Tillotson and his solicitor hurrying towards him very eagerly. The former's face had sympathy in it. Ross's lip curled, his eyes flashed. Before he could speak, Mr. Tillotson spoke to him. "I do, indeed, feel for you," he said. "It has turned out differently to what I expected. I was carrying out the wishes of one to whom it really belonged, and so had no discretion."

"Why do you make excuses to me?" said the other furiously. "Who asked you? Take what these precious laws give. Did I complain to you?"

The other answered as eagerly: "I wish to befriend you; I do, indeed, though you never will believe me. I wish to make it up to you in some way, and you may depend you shall not lose by it. It was *hers*, and *is* hers, and I look on all her wishes as sacred. If it was my own I should have withdrawn from the matter.

"What virtue and nobleness!" said the other; "too good for this world. As I told you, stop all this or it will be worse. I can't bear it now. I give you fair warning. Do you think," he added, in a low voice, "this is to go on always, or that I shall put up with persecution of yours, or even this infernal patronising of yours?"

"God knows," began Mr. Tillotson——

"I tell you," said the other, "it *shall* stop. There's a point, you

know, and this finishes it all. You think you have got the better of me hitherto, but I tell you no. It is not all done, cleverly planned as it is——"

"Hush! hush!" said the other looking round, for he had begun to raise his voice and attract notice. "You won't understand, I see; but think of it, and be assured——"

"I *will* think of it," said the other, "and *you* shall think of it too. You think you have got me down now, ruined me, finished me, stripped me of every thing, and that I am quite helpless; but you haven't, Tillotson. I'll be even with you yet, if I die for it. Fine manly behaviour this of yours, hunting a man not so rich as yourself out of every thing. Noble, generous, charitable, and the rest of it. Because you thought I was down, down, and going down. By God, Tillotson, another fellow with anything like a heart in him would be ashamed of it, he would. But you have none. You are a cold creature, and——"

A hand was laid on his arm. Grainger stood beside him. "I couldn't believe this of you, Ross," he said, "crying and making a noise like a girl over a beating of this sort. I am ashamed of you. Come away quietly, and don't be disgracing yourself by such an *exposé*. Mr. Tillotson, I am sure, will excuse you, and will make allowance; but I don't think any other man could."

"And do you mean to tell me," said he, in a loud wild voice (they were now in the hall)—"do you mean to tell me that I am to be put off in this way—*bamboozled* among the whole gang of you? I see what it is; you were in league with that infernal Tillotson. You have sold me because he had more *money*. But take care. Look out, you and your infernal crew of sharpers; I'll have it out of one or the other of you. Oh, my, my, my! To be treated in this way! Kept on so many years. What's before me now? What's to become of me? tell me that. Why it's ruin—ruin!"

His voice had lost all its violence, and he tottered against the wall. Mr. Tillotson could say nothing, but passed on. Some of the idlers and country visitors, staring at the London wonders, drew round him. The next moment a soft hand was laid on his arm, a softer voice rang in his ear, softer eyes looked down with indescribable sympathy.

He knew the touch, and drew away from her without any of the old anger or violence, which she might have anticipated. "Leave me—go away," he said. "It is all done at last—finished. I am not worth looking after now. I give up—I give in—sold. Done on every, every side!" and his head drooped upon his chest.

She was deeply touched. "Don't give up hope," she said. "We shall find something. Leave it all to me. Only promise me—do not be cast down. I *know* all must come right, and shall;" and thus she soothed him, almost passionately.

Suddenly his eyes flashed. "But as for him, don't let him fancy

that I have done with him yet, though he *is* your husband. I shall have him at my feet yet. I shall have him cringing before me. He little knows what is coming—not he! *Now* we are quits. He has done his worst to me, and it's my turn. I had forgotten it. *You* have no idea of it, my dear. But all in good time—only wait——"

"Hush," said a calm voice beside him. "You will have a crowd gather here. My dear friend, have some dignity, and let us take our defeat calmly. Come away—come with me, and don't let us overtax Mrs. Tillotson's good nature."

She was still gazing at Ross, a little scared at his strange denunciations, of whose truth she had an instinct.

"Don't you think so, Mrs. Tillotson?" Grainger said with deep deference. "There is no use complaining now. The matter is finished, so the next best thing is to see what can be done now. I am sure Mr. Tillotson is not vindictive, and can be generous in his victory. He will not press us very hard; and Mrs. Tillotson, if it would not be too much to ask her, would, I am sure, lend us her good offices."

"I'll have none of them," he answered fiercely. "I want no intercession. He'll be glad enough yet to do what I ask. I'll make him come to me himself—ay, and on his knees, too. I have a screw that I can put on him."

Grainger looked round, alarmed. "How rashly you talk!" he said. "Don't mind him, Mrs. Tillotson. At any rate we must go away now;" and with difficulty he drew his friend with him. The latter said, roughly, he did not want to, and began to walk furiously into the park. Mrs. Tillotson, as she was getting into a cab, found Mr. Grainger beside her.

"I *beg* your pardon," he said with deep humility, "but might I speak to you before you drive away? Only my interest in *him*—and, you will forgive me for saying it, in *you*—who are so concerned for Ross, is my excuse. You can see yourself matters are in a very serious way."

"I can see it indeed," she said almost piteously; "and I know not what is going to happen."

"Exactly; with a man in his frame of mind, morbid, with no sense of control—brooding over its wrongs—why, before night his next step might be——"

"Might be what?"

"Well, I don't wish to frighten you, Mrs. Tillotson, but really I confess I am alarmed when I think of his violent nature. I am beginning to have very little control over him; but I will not lose sight of him. Might I advise you——"

"Thanks; just what I was going to ask you to do."

"We must try and conciliate Mr. Tillotson—make them friends at all risks. Your husband has the reputation of being the gentlest and most noble and amiable of men. He will seize on this oppor-

tunity. He worships—forgive me again—the very ground *you* walk on. This would be an opportunity for a chivalrous man like him. And I shall stake my life on it, that if you go to him straight and ask him (in that way which no husband could resist), our friend will be better off than if he had gained his suit."

But she hesitated. "You are right," she said. "Indeed, he is noble and generous, but—but——"

"But I know it," said the other, "You have only to name a wish and——"

"Yes," she said, still doubtfully; "but there are difficulties. Still, he is so generous. I will go at once. Thanks, thanks; it is the best advice, indeed,—yes,—and I will drive home at once."

Mr. Grainger looked after her with a smile. "Not a bad move that," he said, half aloud.

CHAPTER XIII.

COUNSEL WITH THE CAPTAIN.

THAT night Mr. Tillotson was pacing up and down his study in a sort of excitement. Even his own household had noticed the curious change that had come over him lately; not only his old moodiness, but a sort of fretfulness and ill-temper. He went very often to the window, and looked out impatiently. "Ah," he said aloud, "*she* can give him small comfort. Let him make what he can of his time." Then the cab drove up, and Mrs. Tillotson returned.

She came at once into the study. The soft face was bent down before him, and the soft voice pleaded. "If you are not busy now, could I speak to you?"

"Asking leave to speak with me!" he said bitterly. "Well, well, what can I do for you? Money?"

"No, no," she said hastily; "it is about this—this—wretched business of to-day." As the words escaped her she saw their inappropriateness.

He coloured. "I see," he said, "your husband's victory a wretched business. What do you wish me to do?"

"I know," she said ardently, "that you are generous and noble, and even chivalrous. No one has ever made such sacrifices; and though I have no right to make such a request, still I would plead with you for that poor miserable Ross. We are rich, and do not want this miserable estate. He is so unfortunate, and so unaccount-

able for his actions, that I am sure you will be glad to do this; in fact, for my sake I would ask you to do this; and you are so good and so generous, I know you will not refuse me."

Mr. Tillotson's lips quivered. "This I must altogether decline," he said, rising and going to the window. "It seems ungracious to resist so warm an appeal, but I have thought of it and made up my mind. No, I must decline. I can do nothing for that man. You are witness of all I have endured at his hands; and I am a little surprised that you should be such a persistent advocate. Of course, you have your reasons."

She looked at him calmly. "I have," she said. "He was my oldest—earliest friend."

"An old friend," he repeated sarcastically, "and what crime is there in *my* declining to have anything to do with a desperate man whose life has been but one long insult to me? Is *that* his recommendation?"

She answered with more excitement. "No, his recommendation is that he is in misery and want, and that he is unfortunate. You must not ask me to accept this prohibition. I cannot be so unkind as to abandon him to despair; I am sure you will not. When you come to think of it calmly, your real nature will show itself."

"I repeat," said her husband, "what I repeated before. I desire, I *forbid* that you see or hear from him. You, of course, can act as you please. As for assisting him in any way, or interfering with the law, my final answer is, I decline."

She looked at him a moment with a calm gaze, in which were mingled surprise and grief, then left the room without a word. From that hour the demons of coldness and distrust, bitterness, and pride, descended with all their hideous shadows and found quarters in that house.

In the *Times* of the following morning was a short and even lively sketch of what was called "this curious case," and an outline of the Chancellor's "lucid judgment." It was read by husband and wife separately, and with strange feelings by appellant and respondent—with satisfaction and with ground teeth.

In her own room that afternoon Mrs. Tillotson sat with a flush upon her cheek, the golden hair resting on her hand. She had a proud nature, and with all her softness and sweetness it had been known in her own family that she always was sensitive to resent what was injustice to others. "*And after all the sacrifice I made!*" This she said over very often and aloud. Her heart was full of pity for the luckless and unfortunate Ross. And yet she knew not what to do. But after much thought she saw that the only course was to follow out what her husband had said. Still with what consequences was such a resolution fraught!—a desperate man, whose rage and fury at being neglected might lead him into violence, and above all, that

unseen and mysterious danger which she shrank from, and yet which could not be neglected.

She went over to her writing-table and began a letter, for all was to be concluded that night. It was addressed to Ross, and ran in this shape:

"My dear William,—If you have ever had any love for me, you will do what I now implore of you to do. If you would not make us both miserable, if you have any trust in the regard I had for you, you will comply with my dearest wishes in this matter.

"Latterly, I do not conceal it from you, you have caused me much wretchedness. Independent of all, I feel for you now, and the misfortunes you have suffered. The way you have behaved to *us* has added to my own trials. This cannot go on. Matters have come to that pass that it is necessary for our own peace and happiness that I do not see you any more. If it is any comfort to you to know this, I tell you it is a deep and painful sacrifice to me; for you have hitherto listened to me, and I believe I have had some little influence with you. But it cannot go on longer. There are reasons which I must not tell you. You must not come to our house; that is, if you do not wish to make me wretched. I have undertaken solemn duties, and you know me well enough to know that whatever is my duty I am determined to carry through. You must not come here again. I will not see you, and you must give over all that unruliness, for which I can make allowance, but which will only lead to confusion and misery, and disturb *our* household. I know I can rely on your faith and affection, especially when I tell you that on your complying with this wish of mine more depends than you conceive. I have a presentiment at this moment that something dreadful is impending, unless you comply. Therefore I implore and *command* you, dearest Ross, to comply with what I wish. Save me, too, from the importunity of others of your friends. Do all this, and my prayer is that you may be rewarded.—Yours,

"A. T."

This she sealed up, and sent down to be despatched at once. Then she at last had the feeling on her of having made a perfect sacrifice, and of having done at all risks "her duty." At dinner she met her husband with a confident calm gaze, but he shrank from hers. During that meal he seemed to be trying to speak of indifferent matters. When it was over, he asked had she done some little commission which it was agreed she should do. Accepting this as a proof of interest, she answered eagerly that she had not, but had fixed to do it "the very first thing in the morning."

"Ah," he said, "exactly. It is the same with every thing I ask or wish for."

Again her eyes fell on him with a look of calm, almost cold interrogation. He went on impatiently.

"You understand me. You know what I mean. I am not worth obeying in *any thing*. I am only fit to be hoodwinked and deceived. Ah, *now* you begin to follow. I told you what my wishes were about *him*, and how faithfully you carry them out. You saw *this man* to-day. I know it. *You can't deny it!*"

She drew herself up with a wounded, almost shocked air.

"It has come to this, then," she said sadly. "I have lost your confidence. It's *no* use trying to convince. But I may tell, if I did see him and write to him, it was only to give him a final warning, and for the special object of carrying out what you wished and desired."

Again he was humiliated and repentant. He covered his face.

"I am a miserable and suspicious creature. I know not what I am coming to. But I hear and know such things. I dare not trust even my own heart. Forgive me, forgive me. Do not think too meanly of me, but only show me that it is so, and I will try for the future and drive out this miserable demon of mistrust."

Her face cleared in a moment. The old softness and sweetness came pouring back into it, and was diffused over it like a glory.

"Stop," she said. "You will see from *this* letter the answer that he will send: you may read it; will *that* convince you? There!"

"Ah, yes," he said eagerly. "Ah, yes; but you will have indulgence for this wretched weakness, and after this I promise solemnly——"

But a little trouble and doubt had come into her mind. "Ah, if you sincerely loved and trusted me, you would not need such a poor proof. Do not ask this, or humiliate me so. It will be better not."

But he was cold again in a moment.

"You proposed this yourself," he said.

An hour later, as she had anticipated, arrived the answer, written in characters of impetuous fire, and a fierce scrawl. It was brought into Mr. Tillotson's study. She sat alone in her drawing-room. With a fluttering heart she waited, for she began to feel a little nervous. What if that mad, foolish Ross had written things—she hadn't thought of that. But in a moment the servant came in, and laid the letter before her. It was sealed—sealed with wax; it had not been opened! The old confidence had come back to her husband. He had trusted her. He had not read. Good, generous, noble nature! With a fluttering heart she read this epistle, in a different key to his usual strain:

"Your letter finds me ill and in bed, and hardly able to draw a breath. I suppose there will soon be an end of me, and of my sore and miserable life. The sooner the better I say, for I am heart-sick of the whole business. Since the world began, was there ever a poor devil came into it so worried and persecuted?

"Well, now you write in your *old* way, warning me desperate consequences may ensue, *fatal to us both.* Fatal to us both! Exactly; if you would make me supremely happy, show me *that.* It seems to me the only course. As for *him,* don't be afraid. I am afraid I must be very ill indeed when I can speak so calmly. The fact is I am dead beat. Only mind this, if he is making your life miserable, as you seem to say he is, trying his infamous Blue Beard tricks, his *glarings* and suspicions, if I was in the agonies of death, I should get up and come to you, and scourge him round his own house. Ah, that is all I care for now. I have something on my cheek to remind me of him, and if I could get strength to get to him and pay him off that old score, which I think of day and night, I think I should be easy in my mind. I have never forgotten it a moment, and I can tell you at this moment—for I have got the glass over and am looking at it—it is ugly and angry enough, and smarts me like hell. Ah, I shall have *his* cheek under my arm one day.

"My dear sweet, I wish I had your soft face looking down on me at this moment, and your nice musical voice in my ear. Oh, you stupid, stupid, insensible child, not to have understood me long ago; not to have known that I was a rough proud savage, that would not let any woman know that I loved her. I knew you were *mine,* but I would not let you know I was *yours.* I often think of that wretched day at the vestry door, when he was inside *signing the books and paying the fees.* Ah, if you had told me all you told me *then* only half an hour before! Yet, only for you he had never been so near his grave as at that moment.

"Well, you want to know what I shall do now. He shall have a little peace till I get well; and after what you say, I *shall* get well, for there is business waiting for me, something that will surprise both you and him. Never mind now. I say no more. I am getting ready a screw, a single turn of which will make his white face turn like a sheet of paper. We have hunted up something that he thinks is what they call "secret as the grave," and which he thinks he made all safe years ago. You little know *what* you have married. No matter; all in good time. Wait, only wait, my sweet darling (you see what a mood I am in). We'll let our friend shut his eyes a little, and *then* we shall see.

R."

"I have got some of your dear old letters here, and am going to read 'em, though my poor eyes are dim enough. There's sentiment for you."

For long after she sat with her eyes fixed on this fatal letter. She indeed saw now that it was hopeless to repair its effect. No more ingenious method of destroying her could have been devised. In an agony of mind she knew not where to turn. Then came a sort of proud desperation and defiance from pure consciousness of

innocence, and a feeling that it was beneath her to explain where there was no faith or trust in her, and a determination to let things take their course and right themselves.

She could hardly draw breath, thinking of the narrow escape they had had. It was, indeed, fortunate; though *she* had nothing to reproach herself with. Yet the sense of this relief was lost in a fresh agony of doubts and trouble. What was this secret the restless, frantic Ross had been "hunting up?" For long, indeed, had some such thought crossed her suddenly and uneasily, but she had always dismissed it. This looked circumstantial, even seen through Ross's strange ravings.

What did it mean? what was coming? But then how generous —how noble of him! What confidence he had placed in her!

Alas, for Mr. Tillotson's confidence! At that moment he was below in an agony of grief and misery, and almost fury. Scarcely knowing what he did, he had read that letter, and put his own seal to it.

CHAPTER XIV.

GATHERING PROOFS.

Mr. Tillotson was now deep in some momentous concerns of the great bank. These tremendous operations required great attention and much secret planning. Yet it was remarked that he had grown absent and almost indifferent, which was the more surprising, after they had remarked his sudden change to buoyancy and happiness, and how the clouds had passed from his brow, and how, in short, "that marriage had been the makings of him." Alas, now it seemed that some other cause had been the "unmakings" of him, and the puzzled men at the office could only set him down as "the oddest, queerest cove," whom there was "no havin' any way;" and one gentleman with whom Mr. Tillotson had been obliged to be severe, indemnified himself by repeating privily that that 'ere fellow would be as mad as a hare before long, or his name was not Baker.

The "operation" that now engrossed the company was Mr. Bushell's grand contract for the Railway Roofing Company, with which he was connected. The great and daring scheme for covering in the seven united railways had been much talked about, and various grand iron companies had striven hard to obtain it. But the

diplomacy of "the great Bushell," who knew peers and ambassadors, and specially "our ambassador" out at Madrid, had secured "this concession," and he had generously determined that the company with which he was connected, and only that company, should have the bringing out or "floating" of the project. It was whispered that huge "bonuses," bribes, in fact, had been offered by other societies to "draw off" the great Bushell, as was indeed only natural in the case of a man who had but to "touch" any thing to turn it into gold. But he steadily held to his friends, spoke as little as usual, and yet had put some fifty or sixty thousand pounds certain, with chance of much more, in the way of the bank, without claiming any special credit for the motive.

If he spoke little to the board, he spoke much less to the chairman. He seemed to be "shy" of him, as one of the officers put it. He rarely discussed any thing with him, and when Mr. Tillotson was giving his views, looked towards the window and became abstracted. It was to be seen that he held the chairman's financiering at a very low level. In private, however, his tongue was sometimes more free, and he said to a friend or two on the board, who admired his success and paid him a slavish adulation, "that it was a great pity they were all going so slow!" "It was the most splendid concern in London, and might be *worked* to any extent, and without any rash speculation." He never went beyond this, or vouchsafed details. Yet such words sank deep. Latterly, too, it had been noticed that he had relapsed into his gloom and abstraction, and began to whisper. And it was a pity a more go-ahead sort of man had not been "brought in."

Mr. Tillotson, too, had himself always seemed to shrink from "the Great Bushell." He was too gentle to pronounce any opinion; but when the great Roofing Company question came on, he calmly but firmly opposed it on what were indeed fair and cautious principles. That day's discussion was long remembered in the office. Mr. Tillotson had not come down until late. He had staid at home in his study, in that abstraction which had lately come upon him. There was some bazaar at Hanover Square, and Mrs. Tillotson had gone there in her carriage, exquisitely dressed, to go through some promised duty. For with all her troubles she felt it her pride to go through the offices that society required of her, and dressed and kept up such importance as became the wife of the rich Mr. Tillotson. From the window of her brougham flashing was seen that sad and pensive face, and men in the streets looked after that face and wondered whose the "gorgeous hair was."

It had come on about four o'clock, and they had been discussing for a couple of hours. But every moment Mr. Tillotson had been growing firmer, and more animated, and more convincing in his opposition. He showed that such schemes were full of dangers; pointed to other houses who had followed the same course, and who

had toppled over and come down in ruins; was there not The —, and lately The —, which had been the talk of every one? Money was the commodity they were formed to deal with; money had brought them success, and to money they should keep to.

Up to this point "the great Bushell" had remained silent, but when he saw this confirmed opposition, a look of impatience and scorn came into his face, and to the astonishment of his colleagues he began to speak for the first time, with great energy and almost sarcasm. "I find," said the great Bushell, "I have made a mistake. I have come among a cautious set of gentlemen; I was asked, I was pressed to do this. There were people who almost thought it worth while going on their knees to me. I never moved in the matter. It's been a great sacrifice altogether, and I tell you the truth now plainly; this sort of fiddling work and picking one's steps couldn't pay me—couldn't pay me. I tell you the truth, I did not come in on these terms. There's no harm done, you know, except so far as it's made me lose time and money. But still, I tell you plainly, I *can't* stay, and it's better we should part now. I can't afford to lose my time, and so, gentlemen——"

And the great Bushell pushed back his chair, and, to the consternation of the board, prepared to go.

Mr. Tillotson only smiled, then said gravely, "I have spoken what I thought would be best for us all to do. Decide now irrespective of me. But I warn you, take care what you are doing."

The great Bushell, who seemed to be now, in respect of reserve and cool phlegm, no longer the great Bushell, answered with great temper, and heat, "What do you warn them against, Sir? what are the grounds of your caution? I require, and am entitled to know. Perhaps there are *suspicions*," added the great Bushell, scornfully.

It was growing dark. The sitting had been protracted far longer than usual. There was anxiety in all faces; but they seemed to go with the great Bushell's. The danger of losing that influential man's support struck them with terror. At that moment the lamps were being brought in by the bank servants, one of whom laid a card before Mr. Tillotson, and whispered that "the gentleman was in a hurry, and required to see him particular."

He got up carelessly, perhaps glad of the excuse, walked over to the table where the servants were still putting final touches to their lamps, and read the name. It ran:

"Mr. Charles Eastwood.

"I wish to see you: you can guess for what."

The servants never noticed the half cry, the strange gasp of horror and surprise, the twitch that passed over his face. The card

fluttered down from his fingers, was picked up reverently and offered to him, but he could not see it. He stood there fixed, staring, trembling; his eyes turned on the place where the card had been.

Suddenly he roused himself, and walked slowly from the room. One of the bank servants went solemnly before him and officially threw open the door of the parlour. Before it closed, he heard the visitor's cheerful voice say, "Well, fifteen years since that night, Tillotson, and *here I am back again.*"

That interview lasted more than half-an-hour. Once Mr. Tillotson's pale face came to the door and bade the same servant to bring him down a blank cheque, which was done. At the end of this time the visitor and Mr. Tillotson came out together; but another Mr. Tillotson, a worn, stooped, dazed, and hopeless man. The same bank servant showing out the visitor, a wild, inflamed, unmoneyed-looking man, heard him say:

"Take care, my boy, now, be up to time, you know." To which the other replied in a sad and almost broken voice:

"You may depend on me!"

He seemed almost to totter up stairs. When he entered the board-room again, he looked round on them all with a sort of listless wonder, as if surprised to find them still there. He put his hand to his head, as if in pain. They called to him, "What do you say now, Tillotson?"

But he still seemed in a dream. He took his place mechanically in the chair. The great Bushell was still warm with his protest, and was ready with fresh scorn and defiance. But when the chairman was again asked and pressed by many voices, he to their surprise answered listlessly, he was willing with all his heart. Let them do as they pleased; by all means let them "bring out" the Roofing Contract Company. And the great Bushell, much mollified at this adhesion, said, how at last he believed they would begin to turn the corner and do a little brisk business for once.

It was dark when Mr. Tillotson wandered home. Mrs. Tillotson had just come in from her bazaar. A lamp half turned down was in his study, but he did not take the trouble to raise it; but he paced round and round, with his head sunk hopelessly on his chest. He had that twisted crumpled card in his hand, on which his eyes were strained:

"Mr. Charles Eastwood,

"I wish to see you: you can guess for what."

What did this mean? or was this some sword of Damocles hanging for years over his head, and whose fine thread had at last given way? With his eyes still fixed on the card, he muttered

to himself over and over again, "How did he know? how did he know?"

Then at last he raised his lamp, sat down to his desk, and covered his face with his fingers. Any one looking in as he drew away those fingers, would have seen almost an old man's face there. Then he mechanically took up the letters and papers that had come in since he had been away. The letters he did not open; but among them was his bank-book sealed up, newly sent home from the bank, having been "posted up duly;" and as he opened it carelessly, out of its pocket slipped the sheaf of returned cheques, stamped, and scored, and punctured all over. Some seemed to strike him as they caught his eye, and drawing his lamp over, he began to go over them eagerly. He found one he was looking for—that for two hundred—turned it over with a sort of bitter smile, read Ross's endorsement on the back. Then he looked at the backs of them all, one after the other; on two he found the name "*Grainger*," and at last on one—nearly the last—and which was for fifty pounds, two endorsements which made him start and turn pale, and hold them close to the light, to be sure of his senses. They were:

Ada Tillotson.
Charles Eastwood.

A cold dew broke out on his forehead, and the paper fluttered away from his hand. He fell back in his chair, and covered his face with his hands. Who could resist proof like this? The most charitable, that is, the most foolish, must be convinced indeed. It was now become only too plain and simple. He was the old, weak, soft fool that he was always to be, the poor destined victim. He had taken *her* from one she loved, and it was only natural that with her beauty and loveliness thrown away on such a being as he was, whom gratitude had forced her to marry, she should long to be free again. She was pining for her old love, and had set herself to hunt out this secret he had kept so long. It was *she* who had brought this man to the surface again. But he would not be the soft victim they took him for. He was not to be sacrificed between them. They would find *that*.

At this moment a cold, hoarse voice addressed him and made him start, asking was he ill. It was Martha Malcolm. "I thought you rang," she said, "and you came in looking so unwell. I was afraid——"

"I *am* unwell, Martha," he said, "mind and body both, and I almost hope I shall be more so yet: for then it will all end!"

"Ay, I know how it will end, and how it's going on fast to end. Never mind yet. It'll be bad for those that have put all this trouble on you. I see things which, perhaps, I have no business to see but it's coming to be high time to speak."

"Ah, Martha," said he, with deep grief, "you are faithful and true out of them all. You are devoted to your master's interests, and you have never had credit given you for your fidelity."

"I don't want it," she said, bluntly, "for I don't deserve it. I liked her, she that's gone, and that no one minded much when she was here; that's all I pretend to. I say it openly, I don't care for her that's come into her place—and, for that matter, may have put her out of it. You were her husband, Sir. And now, I tell you, things is going on strangely in this house. When its master is away at the office, men and gentlemen have no business to be coming here and whispering up stairs on the sofa, and sending letters here. It's hard for you to understand it, away all day at the bank; others can keep their eyes open."

"Tell me, Martha," he said, starting up eagerly. "Ah! tell me all this. It is what I suspected, and the thing I want to know. *Who* comes here? I have a right to know. I must know."

"Ah," she said, "they don't ever give their names. They are too cautious for *that*."

"Tell me," he continued, more excitedly. "Do you recollect any one—black hair, and a red inflamed face, and a——?"

"Yes," she said, slowly, "*he's* come. I've seen him—Black wood——"

"Eastwood!——"

"Eastwood or Blackwood—ah, that's it—and Ross, and that Grainger—smooth gentleman, who admires my lady and her lovely hair. Depend upon it, they've all some little game they're working together, and my lady knows more than she will let *you* know."

"I believe it, I believe it," said he, walking about the room excitedly. "I have suspected it long ago. But I have had my eyes open, Martha. Thank you, though. Thank you. You are very faithful and good, and you will oblige me indeed by—it is your duty, too—by watching carefully still. I must know every thing, *every thing*. I depend on you. It is my right, you know."

CHAPTER XV.

A REVELATION.

During these days it was noticed that Mr. Tilney took to visiting Mrs. Tillotson a good deal. She, indeed, always dutiful, received him with the same unvarying welcome and affection, and what was

perhaps still more satisfactory to him, had the brown sherry always in readiness.

Latterly, however, he had fallen into a habit of what he called "dropping in," one night upon the Captain, another night upon Mrs. Tillotson. With the Captain, who always treated him as a guest of grandeur, and his visit as an exceeding honour, he was welcomed with the familiar decanter of sherry. With Mrs. Tillotson the same ceremony was repeated; but with her he got into the habit of bemoaning himself in an arm-chair, with his face turned to the ceiling hopelessly. This dejection had reference chiefly to gathering money difficulties, and especially to what he called his "native home." "See me here," he said, "dishonoured, I may say, in my old age. I have no place to lay my grey hairs, that is, my head;" for he was conscious that the colour of his hair was brown. "They hunt me like a hare. They do, indeed. The only thing I can compare it to is poor what-d'ye-call-him, your father, whom they hunted to——By the way, where does Tillotson get *this?* Does he bottle himself?"

"My poor father," said she sadly, "I begin now to look back to *him*—better than being alone in the world. We turn back to those old friends again and again, though *that* was only a dream, and must ever remain so. It was God's will that I should be *so* young at that time."

"Only a dream, as you say, my dear, and far better it should stay so. Far better than have our pillow, yours and Tillotson's, I mean, full of thorns."

"Oh, what would I give," she said with sudden eagerness, "to know the whole, no matter what pain or sorrow it brought with it! Latterly I have begun to turn back to that time, and something tells me I shall know all yet. In fact, I think I have got on the track."

Mr. Tilney started. "God bless me, don't, my dear child! Put it out of your head; much better and more sensible not. There are good reasons why all these *old* things should be let to lie."

"I'll tell you," she said, stopping her work, and not heeding his expostulation,—"I have been turning it over a great deal, and a thing has struck me. Promise me you will admit it."

"Nonsense, nonsense," said he, waving his hand half sadly.

"I suspect my husband has been told of it, and has been cautioned."

Mr. Tilney started. "No, no, my dear; put it out of your head. He knows no more than this—this glass of wine."

"But he does," said she, "and I'll tell you why. When we were travelling—now mark this—there was a little Italian town directly in our way on the coast—Spezia."

"Spezia!" said Mr. Tilney, looking at her amazed, and laying down his glass untasted, a sign of genuine astonishment. "Why, that's—how did you?"

"Ah, I know it," she went on. "We turned out of the road and avoided it. He wished to spare me. He has been cautioned."

"Upon my soul," said Mr. Tilney, looking round, "this is next to marvellous. Perhaps he does know something. Poor Dick Bateman knew everybody, and may have met *him*. Still we were all bound up, you know; and so you took a *détour?* How curious!"

"You know it all," she said, more excitedly. "If you could only imagine how it has taken hold, how it haunts me in dreams, how latterly a sort of unrest and craving has come upon me to know all, to have something to cling to in the weary hours that I have to pass through. Dearest father, as I always call you and have called you, do this one thing for me."

"Why not ask *him*, then?" said Mr. Tilney, in real trouble and agitation, flying for assistance to the comforter beside him, "since he knows; though indeed, my poor child, why should your little life be troubled, when an old wreck like me can give you a little comfort? After all, we are not to keep you a child *all* the days of your life; and really, now we are so snug here, and so comfortable, that I don't see why——There was a little money, as you know, my dear; and I, as you know, my dear, was clothed with a sort of trust. But I have been so run from post to pillar—so hunted about, like the commonest hare, that literally, my dear, I was *obliged*——"

She stopped him. "You must never talk of that, dear papa," she said gently. "It was quite right; for it was all yours—*all*. Had you not been at the cost of taking care of *me* for so many years? Never speak of it; but tell me about these letters and papa whom I never saw, but for whom I feel—oh, such a yearning!"

Mr. Tilney was mellowed into an extraordinary power of melancholy retrospect.

"Dear me," he said, "I remember the whole so well, as if it was only last night, and yet it is how many years ago now?"

"And you saw him, and knew him?" she asked eagerly. "I always thought that your goodness to me was a mere accident—that some friend——"

"Don't let us call it accident," said Mr. Tilney, lifting his eyes devotionally. "Nothing is accident—not even the sparrow on the house-top! In a certain sense, I did *not* know him—hardly. But indeed the time is ripe, my dear, when you should know something of this. Do you know, I feel a *pang* at having kept it from you so long? I was travelling at that time with poor Dick Bateman, now gone. Before that, indeed, he broke hopelessly—horse and foot; but at that time he was really as nice a fellow to know as you'd wish for. He was on the Dook's staff, too, and I picked him up at Venice, or some such place; so we agreed to travel home together. Same chaise, and that sort of thing. And, coming home,

I recollect very well our stopping at one of those little Italian towns. Bateman, dear, was as fine-hearted and romantic a fellow as you'd ask to see. Well, we dined at the inn—a very fair dinner indeed, and *uncommon* good wine, and sat out in the garden drinking it; and while we sat there a gentlemanly-looking man, a little decayed and broken-up though, came out to one of the little tables, and had his bottle of wine there. He had been a handsome fellow in his days, but was rather gone about the cheeks here, and he sat there taking his wine until it got towards ten o'clock. I think he was listening to us talking, for we were in high spirits. When, as we were getting up to go away, he came over and stopped Bateman, and, in good English, asked to speak to him for a moment. Now if poor Dick had a horror of any thing in this world, or in the next, it was of your gentlemanly-seedy Englishman, so he drew himself up a little dryly. 'I used to know you,' said the Englishman—'I knew you well only a few years ago, Mr. Bateman, and you will know me when I tell you my name.' 'What!' said the other, starting back and recollecting him; '*you*, Augustus Milwood? What is this? What does all this mean?'"

"And this," said Mrs. Tillotson, her soft eyes fixed on the story-teller, "this was——"

"Yes, my dear," said Mr. Tilney, now grown grave and rational, and really moderate in his applications to nature's kind restorer, "yes, it was indeed. A man I had often heard of—moving in the best—fine estate—money—every thing; but run through it all. A common end, indeed. But Dicky Bateman was a true and noble fellow, and many's the time he's——He went aside with Milwood, and was away, I suppose an hour, and then he came to my room just as I was turning in. He was full of excitement, my dear. I remember it all as if it was only last night. 'We must be ready to go in the morning,' he said (we were to have stopped a couple of days), 'and I have ordered the chaise for six o'clock.' 'My goodness,' said I, 'I am dead-beat. I thought we were to lie by here a little.' 'Well,' said he, 'the fact is, I have promised to see poor Milwood through—or Alvanly, as he calls himself here. Fact is, he has got into a row with a young Englishman, somehow, at the tables at Monaco, and they have come on here to settle it. He has been infamously treated—forced into it—and is as low as if he was going to be hung. I shall see him through, Tilney.' Then he told me a good deal about this poor Milwood, or Alvanly, as he was called there; that he had been treated cruelly on all sides, and that he had not a relation in the wide world to be kind to him or look after him; that his wife, for whom he had a deep affection, had died two or three years before, and with her death he had thrown off all restraint. But he had with him a little girl, only a couple of years old, whom he had been obliged to leave at home with a hired nurse, and her future was the thing pressing upon his mind.

He told Dicky Bateman that he had just a couple of thousand left out of all his fortune, and that he was getting through that as speedily as he could, and so that perhaps this interruption was the best thing that could happen. I never saw any one so affected as poor Dicky was with the whole business, and he sat up half the night with his friend arranging every thing, and promised him to look after the child, and take care of it, and he got me to promise also to help him. You, my dear, were that little child, at that time far away in England."

Mrs. Tillotson listened, with the devotional eyes bent upon the ground. Then she said, "Dearest father, why did you not tell me all this before?"

"Well, I must finish," said Mr. Tilney hastily, "for, my dear child, you may guess what I am coming to, and, indeed, there is no use dwelling on it, and, indeed, it has been hinted to you often, dear. It was a very sad and cruel business, and I often afterwards thought of that poor lonely outcast Englishman who had no friend or relation to care for him, and his mournful melancholy face. At times in my sleep even I used to see it. But, however, I may as well finish now. I was up the next morning, and we had the chaise ready, and I waited in it on the post-road with the trunks ready on, and the post-boys in the saddle. I remember it was a lovely bright morning, and the sea was as blue as a turquoise brooch, and glistened like silver, and I was looking down at the coast when I saw Dicky running to the chaise for his bare life. He got in. 'Drive on,' said he, 'for your lives! Two crowns each more! My God,' said Dicky, throwing himself in, 'it's all over! What a thing to have on one's soul!' My dear," said Mr. Tilney, with unusual gentleness, and a tenderness that had nothing to do with sherry, "now you see why it was as well I never went into this matter. It was no use. Now, now. Don't—don't go on so," added he soothingly. "You know yourself you were only a child in arms at the time."

"But such a cruel, cruel end," sobbed Ada. "Oh, my poor, poor father! To think of his dying in that miserable way."

There was a silence for a few moments. "It spoiled our tour," continued Mr. Tilney; "begad it did; for poor Dicky took it immensely to heart. We posted on as hard as we could go, and he told me the whole business as we went along. Poor Dicky, he felt it very much; for he said the others were savages, and were determined to have the man's life, and tried again and again. Then, when we got home, he made *you* out, my dear, and I must say looked after you like a father until he died, which was in a couple of years, and then I promised poor Dick Bateman, on his death, that I would take his place. And there you have the whole story. And so I did, my dear. And there, in your hands, are the last letters he wrote. And there, my dear, is the little picture. Now, now, don't——"

Ada was weeping convulsively. "My poor, poor father!" she said. "And this was his wretched end, and I never to know all this time. Never to have an opportunity of praying God to execute justice on his murderers. All in His hands. He has looked to *that*, and I begin to pray now."

"Yes," added Mr. Tilney devotionally. "We may depend on it, all that sort of thing is ordered. Not the smallest sparrow you could pick out on a housetop drops down on us, without a Providence. Most wonderful are 'the ways and works and general regulations of an All-seeing Eye. Wonderful, indeed!"

When Mr. Tilney left that night it was long past midnight; and down the stairs, and even up the street and round the square, he kept repeating to himself something about "the regulations of an All-seeing Eye!"

At home that day there was therefore a deeper gloom and oppression. The wretched meal dragged through oppressively. Mr. Tillotson scarcely spoke, said he was unwell, and when the dinner was over, went to his study. With a growing sadness, which was tinged with wonder and wounded pride, Mrs. Tillotson sat up stairs alone.

Ever since the visit of Mr. Tilney, the strange story he had told her had been the subject of all her reveries, and distracted her from greater troubles. She could hardly bring herself to think over those dismal revelations, and yet in these solitary hours she found herself dwelling on them with a piteous retrospect and a strange yearning after the parent whom she had never known or seen, but whom every hour she was pining to have known. Often, too, she sat with a little packet of letters before her, which Mr. Tilney had sent her, but which as yet she could not bring herself to read. For among them were those last letters of all written on that fatal night, and which she now shrank from. Often and often she had put off this duty, knowing what pain and sorrow it would bring her; and she every moment felt herself drawn nearer and near to it. One idea, however, began to take firm hold of her mind, and that was a sort of expiatory and filial pilgrimage to the grave of her lost parent; and the more she thought of this, the more it soothed her. And finally she began to think over it with a soft pleasure and anticipation.

On this night the letters were there before her, and at last, by a sort of uncontrollable impulse, she made up her mind to go through them. The very look of the first seemed to bring the little Italian town like a picture. She saw the cool evening after the sultry day, the retired garden and the strangers arriving in their chaise, and the poor outcast sitting there lonely by himself. The first she opened was a letter to herself: she kissed the faded characters. It was in a trembling hand. It ran:

"Rose of Italy,
" Time, three o'clock in the morning.

"I leave these few lines, which I hope my friend will take care of, and see that they be given to my little girl Ada when she grows up, and shall have come of age. I write knowing well that I am doomed; but I would wish that she should never know my miserable end until then, as I would not wish her sweet childhood to be troubled by any gloom. Tell her that her father died of fever, plague, any thing. Any end will do for so unlucky and wretched a life as mine has been.

"At this moment, my dear sweet Ada, you are sleeping in your little cot, not thinking of what is coming on your wretched father. Perhaps it is all for the best, and I may as well end this way as another. If I was to live longer, I should only bring disgrace on you, my child, and rob you of the little fortune that is left. Thank God, I have not touched *that*, though it has cost me some hard struggles and temptations. It was a great agony to part with you, and if I had stayed by you, my sweet child, all this would never have happened. God bless you, if such a being as I am may invoke a blessing on so pure a creature."

Her tears fell fast as she read. There were others, one to his friend Bateman. It began:

"I feel I am a doomed man. That wicked truculent savage is determined to have my blood, and he has worked that youth up to fury. And yet as I sit here, for my last night, I declare to you, guilty as I have been all my life, I am innocent of this; I never spoke to that lady in my life. The truth is, I won some money from them at the tables, and the elder has been in a fury ever since. The young man is, I think, half mad with rage and jealousy, and they have followed me on here, hunting me like a dog or a hare. I confess to you I was anxious to avoid them—not from fear, as they imagine, but because I have a presentiment that as they were determined to have my blood, I knew they would succeed. I *did* fly in the night, and now they have overtaken me, and I feel my death-warrant. But oh, Bateman, my poor sweet little girl! What is to become of *her*? I have not a friend in the world; they have all left me because they think I have disgraced them. And yet I have only been unfortunate. Oh, what is to become of her, unless you, and after you other friends, look to her! *That* is what disturbs me in these last moments. Otherwise I should be resigned, and let those two bloodhounds have my life any way they pleased. I do not expect fair play, for I hear they have sworn to have my life, and they are welcome to it; for the youth fancies my death will be the best news he can take back and recommend himself with.

"And now one more thing, Bateman. When the time comes for my sweet Ada to know this miserable story, see that she learns the

true state of things; let her not associate any vile history or disgrace and shame with her father's name. I here protest that all my life I have been more sinned against than sinning; that I have been the victim of enemies and of my own weakness; and that now in this last act I am helpless and powerless, and driven to what I cannot avoid. Heaven, I hope, will accept it as a little expiation for errors."

She wept long in silence over this paper. Then she turned to another which was in a different hand. This dated from a Paris hotel, and after some months. It ran:

"In obedience to the wishes of my poor friend Milwood, I now set down here for his daughter to read, when she comes of age, what happened on that morning.

"I had learned from the innkeeper that he had arrived there much exhausted about noon of that day, and that about eight o'clock the same evening a chaise had come up with two gentlemen, who had followed him into the garden, where a dreadful scene had taken place. The two were very wild and excited, and one had even threatened to shoot him on the spot. I arrived myself shortly after, and was astonished to find an old friend in such a condition. Then he told me his position—that these two desperate men had entangled him in this quarrel about a Frenchwoman, whom he had scarcely spoken to in his life,—whose advances, indeed, he had rejected,—and who had set the younger of the two to avenge the slight.

"The two were literally beside themselves with fury; the younger, in a sort of fever with rage and dissipation; the elder from some old grudge about money against Milwood. They were disappointed at his finding a friend there, for I think they hoped to have their victim all to themselves, with no one to interfere. But I took a very firm tone with them.

"At five in the morning they met on the sea-shore. I had great difficulties in keeping up the spirits of my friend, who kept saying that he was a doomed man. His last words were, 'Don't forget my poor little Ada;' and his last act was to hand me the enclosed letter for her. I encouraged him as well as I could; but I could not shake off a sense of depression myself. The two were very eager to begin, and it was agreed that they should throw for the first fire. We gained it. 'Courage,' I whispered to him, 'this is a great chance for us. On this depends everything, so be steady.' But his hand was shaking. 'I see my poor little girl,' he said, as he took the tools, 'and I feel that I have behaved *cowardly* in abandoning her. Mind, mind,' he added in a despairing whisper, '*mind*, I rely on you, Bateman.' The word was then given. He fired, and to my satisfaction I saw that his adversary was hit on the elbow. He gave a cry of rage. I stepped forward and said, that now the matter could not, or need not, go further. But the old man, frantic with

rage, swore it should; and the young man, all bleeding as he was, stamped and said, unless I stood away, he would fire there and then. On that Milwood came himself, said he was ready, and folding his arms, went back to his place, and waited calmly. 'Don't forget,' he said to me; 'I have but a moment more to live.' The young man, whose hand trembled with pain, now called out, and his friend said to him in a low voice, 'If you miss him now, by God, I won't miss you!' 'Ah!' said the other, 'I have him;' and he fired. The ball struck him in the centre of the forehead, and Milwood fell like a stone."

The letter dropped from her fingers. For many minutes she sat there sobbing, and without venturing to pick it up, and finish the dismal story. It was, in fact, already finished. There was no more to read, and she sat there with her heart turning towards that little Italian town where her unhappy father had met with such an end.

Suddenly a voice disturbed her. She raised her eyes, still filled with tears, and saw before her Mr. Tillotson, looking at her steadily, and with a letter in his hand. "Tears," he said. "What are you suffering from now? More oppression? Perhaps some of *my* work? I am sorry to disturb you," he went on, "but here is a letter just arrived for you. Heaven knows I have no wish to be tyrannical, or to restrain you in any of your desires; but I have a duty to myself and to you. I have said again and again that I do not wish any communication with your friend, this Ross. I have even commanded this, so far as I have the power. You set me at defiance."

"I do not," she answered. "But what does all this mean? I am weary of it. I have no wish but what you wish. Why do you accuse me in this way? What is this change that has come over you?"

"No wish but what I wish!" he repeated indignantly. "And you say that to me—you that make appointments with this man and his friends, that are encouraging and writing to him, and taking his part against your husband. No wish but mine!" he repeated. "No, no. At least, let us have no shams or pretences."

The colour came into her cheeks. "I grieve for this," she said. "I am sorry. I didn't think you would have resorted to *that*, to set spies on me. I see you have lost all trust, love, and confidence in me. Well, perhaps it is for the best."

"I lost! No. Don't think that I am ignorant of what is going on, or of what has been going on. I am not the poor, soft, weak, plighted fool that I have been taken for; and I shall take care to show it yet. Perhaps I am changed; but who has changed me? What has changed me? There, take your letter. Do as you please.

Write to him. Defy your husband. I suppose I must only submit."

Suddenly she ran towards him. "Dearest husband," she said, "this is some delusion. Some wicked people have been filling your mind with these wild suspicions. Shut them out. Dismiss them. You know me. As for poor Ross, it is only for him I am anxious. We are only anxious that he should go away, and if we could see some opening——"

"I dare say," said Mr. Tillotson, sadly. "Nothing more suitable."

A sudden idea came to Mrs. Tillotson. "Or," she said, "you would not object to this. I see you have taken up some strange ideas about me and my conduct, which no argument can dispel. It is useless reasoning. What if I went away? I want to travel. Then after a time—a few months—you would take a juster view of me and my conduct."

"And where would you wish to go, if I might ask?"

"I have thought of that, and settled it. I should like to go again to Italy—to that town on the coast which we passed by—Spezia."

He started back and turned pale. "To Spezia! What do you mean?"

"I may not tell you now," she said; "but I have good reasons. If you recollect, we passed it by on our travels. But it is a duty I have too long delayed."

"This to me," he cried, sinking—"this from you! Oh, Ada, then it is too true. Go, then. Carry out your schemes; ruin, disgrace us. I shall make no resistance." She thought he would have fallen from his chair, so ghastly did he look. But in a moment he had risen, and rushed away from the room.

"What does all this mean?" she said distractedly. "What is going to happen? Oh, Heaven, look down on me! What are these dark insinuations? I seem to be in a dream. It is in vain to argue or resist. God help me!" She saw the old letters lying at her feet, and half mechanically she took them up, half mechanically she let her eyes fall on the part where she had left off. She read on:

"If ever there was murder done on this earth, it was by those two men. God forgive them! His blood is on their heads, and calls to Heaven for vengeance. Slowly and surely may it track them. If I am doing wrong, I am accountable; but there can be no sin in praying that earthly retribution may overtake that ruffian Eastwood——"

"Eastwood!" she almost shrieked; but she read on:

"—and his wicked companions in guilt."

Her faithful maid coming up that night had found her in a sort of swoon. The household, who, with the instinct of households, knew pretty well what was going on of late, set this down as but a development of the new state of things, that "not getting on," which had arisen between master and missus; but it must have gone very far indeed that night; and looking at the circumstance of an open letter in her hand, it was set down as being "all along" of that Ross.

When she came to herself again, the sense of her dreadful discovery came upon her with fresh force. "I must go away," she said. "I cannot see him again, or touch that hand! I must go away. Out on the world! Somewhere—I cannot breathe in this house."

After that night a yet deeper shadow settled on the Tillotson house. It seemed to others as though some deep blow had fallen on Mrs. Tillotson, which had crushed her, though they could not guess what it was. But from that evening from Mr. Tillotson she seemed to shrink away with a sort of terror. He himself could hardly understand this change, for she now made no protest, and accepted all his wishes with a dreamy submission. Still she did not forget that one purpose, which had come upon her in the night like a sort of inspiration, to get Ross away—any where; even implore of him to go. At the first opportunity she set out for the Captain's residence.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CAPTAIN HELPS.

As usual, he was overpowered with the honour of a visit from a lady. "Well, well; and give me the hand again. My God! And to be caught in this way. I'm ashamed of myself; so I am. Just like an old woman—nothing ready. See, my dear. Sit yourself down there—not on *that* one—it's got as bad a leg as myself. But I mean to make a job of it—a regular job, you know—some day next week. And did you walk here?—now, now—you must:" and the Captain's fingers were on his little keys, and he was on the march towards the "guard-her-vine." There was a large official document before him, to which he saw her eyes wander. "Ah! There's what they've sent me now! They've found out I've been drawin' full allowances long enough, and want to get a little work

out of me. And, indeed, God knows it's a shame, and it makes me blush sometimes, when there's many a poor struggling fellow overrun with children—the creature who ought to have it instead of a lazy good-for-nothing Bolshero like——However," said the Captain with some pride, "this is from the War Office—no less. They are going to put some of the Royal Veteran Battalion and the pensioners to garrison some of the little coast forts in Ireland. Gad, I remember them well. The martellos; many's the time I passed them. I think," said the Captain, with a sort of wistful doubt, I could do something in that way. Guard-mounting once in a morning. I haven't forgot the words o' command yet. Ah, but after all, what can they do with an old foosterer like me, who can't stand straight on his two legs? Now, my dear, enough about old Tom and his concerns. How's Tillotson?"

Thus, with much hesitation, she began to tell him what she had come for. The Captain interrupted her at once.

"I see," he said. "The very thing, God bless me! What sense ladies have! They can buy and sell the whole of us. Now, give me the hand for that. I am really very much obliged to you for coming to me in this way; I am indeed. I'll just sit down this very day and make a pen, and write a line to General Cameron, my old friend—that's to say, when he was then Colonel Cameron—as fine a soldier as ever stepped. He'll do it; and if he can't, we have other irons in the fire, dear. There's Colonel Wombell, at the Horse Guards. So make your mind easy, we'll take care of Master Ross."

"Dearest Captain, how kind, how good you are!"

"No. But I am obliged to you for coming to me. It's an obligation; and now let us leave that, or look on it as good as settled and done, and tell me how you go on yourself. I am afraid, do you know (you might mind, my dear, an old boy like me that could be your grandfather, and proud I'd be if I was!); but I have an interest in you both, and you won't mind *me*, I know. Now, I declare it quite grieves me to see what's going on, you and he as nice a pair as ever was put together, and born to be happy; and if I could be the least use in the world, God knows I'd put these old eyes upon sticks to make things square." She hung down her head.

"It is no use, dearest uncle. It is hopeless. Nothing could be done. He is possessed by some strange delusion about me, and besides, I myself—— No, dearest Captain, I see it's all quite hopeless. Nothing can be done. It must all go on as it has gone on."

"But surely, my dear," said the Captain wistfully, "a word in season might set all straight; and if I now——"

She shook her head. "It cannot be. You do not know all, nor dare I tell you all. I only want to see some end or issue of these scenes. But I suppose I must only bear all."

The Captain wondered to hear this language. "I am an old Bolshero," said he, "and will be so till they come to measure me

for the old chest. But I know Tillotson so long and so well, I'd stake my salvation there's a mistake between ye of some kind. There is, I know. There never was a finer, or a better, or a nobler creature on the face of this earth. He likes you only too well, my dear; and, trust an old boy who has seen a little life, it's all jealousy."

"It is not that," she said hurriedly, and rising to go; "there is more than that—enough to make us wretched the rest of our life. But we must try and bear our lot. As for you, dearest Captain, how shall I ever thank you for this goodness?" And the golden-haired lady faded out of the room, leaving the Captain in a little wonder.

Though he admired her, he had never "taken to her" so cordially. His old "little girl" was always in the corner of his heart. "The creatures," he thought, "when they're young, they will like being flattered, and have men after 'em. She wants a little sense, I think." Thus, with great form and ceremony, he got out his great writing-desk bound with brass, opened it with equal ceremony, drew a special sheet of paper, and finally selected a quill pen, which he proceeded to "make;" then he got into his dressing-gown, and, bent painfully down with the "specs" on, began his despatch:

"My dear General,"—"My dear General" he had to repeat to himself a great many times over in a sort of hearty, friendly way, as if the general was then sitting before him. "My dear General," he began again, "I know you have not forgotten your old brother officer, whose name is at foot, and his mess-days of the old Fiftieth. I hope, my dear general, you are well and flourishing, and that everything is going straight with you. I have not forgotten all your old kindness to me, and never shall, please God. You were always a true friend, and therefore I am ashamed to say what I am going to say, which in is the nature of begging; but the extremity of the case must be my sole excuse."

(The Captain was greatly pleased with this turn, which he read over aloud several times. "The extremity of the case must be my sole excuse.")

"That will do uncommonly well," he said. "Now to the point."

"There is a young man, my dear General, whom we are all anxious to get out of the way here, for *particular reasons;* no man's enemy but his own, and disturbing the peace of domestic families."

(Again was the Captain pleased with this new turn, and read it aloud—"domestic families.") "We want to send him away for fear of *dangers that may ensue.* And if you, *my dear General,* have any berth up the country that would suit a wild young fellow, but a fine soldier-like looking man, I cannot say how you would oblige your old friend,

TOM DIAMOND."

After writing several "copies" of this document, and after many consultations of a little Johnson's Dictionary ("God knows I never was a tip-top speller!"), but carefully and with a pardonable pride

retaining that fortunate phrase, "the necessity of the case must be my *sole excuse*," a fair copy was at last produced, folded, sealed, and directed, with all formality, "His Excellency General the Right Hon. Sir George Cameron, K.C.B., K.H.;" and putting on his best frock, the Captain went to the military club to find out the proper address. That building too the Captain always approached with reverence, as embodying a splendid abstract of the army. To his surprise, he found that General Cameron was actually home on leave from his government, and would be in town for a few days. All letters were to be kept for him there.

"Look here, Sir," said a gentleman who was framed in a window, and who was attracted by the Captain's deference and simple manners, "here's lots of 'em already. The general lives here, I may say, when he's in town. He'll have this in his 'and the first thing, you may depend on it, Sir."

"Thankye, thankye very much," the Captain said gratefully, and his hand went doubtfully to his waistcoat. "Pay-day is the word," he was accustomed to say; "and I declare," he said later, "I was ashamed to go away and not offer this civil and gentlemanly fellow anything for all the trouble; but, 'pon my word, I was ashamed. It would have hurt his feelings—a man like him—in a swell tip-top place like that, with all the officers dropping in and out, and down the steps."

With all this the shadows deepened slowly and surely in that house. Every day the distance seemed to widen between the husband and wife. At times he would see her eyes, those soft eyes, fixed on him with a strange dread that seemed to him like repugnance, and which he resented with a sort of bitter scorn. He brooded more and more over his wrongs, and set down this new phase of things as a sort of defiance, with which she was determined to carry out her own views. Strange gusts of grief and passion swept over him, and which changed as suddenly into a fierce truculent manner, which she accepted with a sort of indifference or resignation. He was growing more and more indifferent to his bank and its concerns every day. He would absent himself for days, and when he came would arrive late, and then start away suddenly, as if to keep an appointment. To say the truth, no protest was made against this behaviour. The great Bushell was taking a stronger interest in the concerns of the bank every day, and often told him, "My dear friend, you don't take *half* care of yourself. I don't like your looks *at all*. Don't mind working *us*. Spare yourself, and when you are well, then you'll do duty for us!"

Gradually, therefore, the great Bushell was becoming an influence in the bank. He had lost all his taciturnity, and, under his inspiration, its operations were beginning to show something like vitality, and getting out of the old "snaily pace," or financial "jog trot."

One thing, and one thing alone, had possession of Mr. Tillotson's mind—a jealous, a mortally jealous watch on the proceedings of his wife.

"If love is gone for ever," he thought, "then I shall have respect, at least. That old dream is gone for ever. But he shall not profit by it."

And in these gloomy meditations he would sit for hours shut up in his study watching every stir up stairs. When the carriage came round, he would go up to ask to know where she was going; and she, with that look of shrinking from him and half averted eyes, would tell him without concealment.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT MISS BELLMAN'S MATINEE.

In these days, about a week later, Mr. Tillotson was sitting in his room one morning when a ring came to the door. Presently he heard a voice in the hall which his quick ear knew at once.

"Not in!" it said,—"Mrs. Tillotson not in! Don't tell me that at this hour of the day. Go up and tell her at once, and I'll sit in the drawing-room."

The servant repeated firmly that she was not in, and that he was sorry that he could not allow any one up stairs.

"Oh, you have received instructions, have you?" said Ross. "You have got your orders. What if I wait in the hall here? I can do that if I choose. Supposing your mistress sent for me on business, eh? did you suppose she would be out? Come, I know as well as I am alive that she's up in her room this moment; don't tell me. And your master, pray? Gone to his bank, I hope. Is it he that has given those orders? Ah! wait, wait! that is all, I say. It does not make so much difference. One place is as good as another to see a person. One house is as good as another. Well, tell your mistress, when she comes in, that she should make no appointments. I am not to be sent about from post to pillar in this way."

Thus this strange being rambled on in the hall. Mr. Tillotson listened in his study, and heard every word, biting his nails to the quick.

That day Mrs. Tillotson's carriage was at the door. As she was going out, the pale face of her husband appeared at the study-door,

"Would you come in here a moment?" he said.

She obeyed, with the old shrinking and averted eyes.

"I shall not detain you," he said; "don't be afraid. I wish to speak about what I have so often spoken of to you before. I cannot have this going on, unless—unless you wish to turn me mad. I have said again and again, he shall not be coming here, and that you are not to see him."

"And do I see him?" she asked coldly.

"*Do* you!" he repeated; "do you make appointments with him? No matter. That all must end now. I cannot have it. I owe it to my own dignity. Or if you choose to defy me openly, and do what you wish yourself, it would be more honourable and straightforward to tell me so plainly. Otherwise it will be my duty to watch you—to have you watched narrowly—and see that my wishes are carried out."

She coloured, and her eyes flashed.

"Since you have lost all confidence in me, I should disdain to make any declarations. I decline to say what I shall do. As you have chosen to bring it to this issue, then be it so with all my heart. As you have announced that I am to be spied on, I scorn to justify myself. The whole is a mystery to me. I did indeed think that, after all, your old love for me, which stood so much, would have stood such a thing as this. But it is better we should understand each other. As you choose to suspect me, you must look to it yourself. Where I feel myself innocent, I shall take no pains to satisfy unjust suspicions."

She left the room, swept out to her carriage, leaving him in a torrent of grief, wonder, and stupefaction. But in a moment he had roused himself.

"I accept what she proposes," he said. "I have been a dupe once; she shall not find me one again. And after her cruel treachery, too!"

Mrs. Tillotson drove away. As she was passing through one of the quieter squares, she saw a walking-stick waving at her eagerly, and recognised Mr. Tilney, very bright and "got up" in a showy morning dress. She stopped, and he came to the window.

"So glad to have met you," he said, leaning his arms on the window, with his stick soldier-wise across his chest as if it was a shield. "So like a Providence, you know. But these things are all in the hollow of His hand—not a sparrow, you know. You must come, positively, and it's a charity, too."

"What! is the dear father," she said, quite accustomed to this elliptical style of communication, "just close by here——"

"Two doors off, I may say. Amelia Bellman, quite a lady, only reduced to give lessons. I remember long ago at the palace, as nice a woman as you could pick out of the street—*any* street,—a Miss Clifford—Ida Clifford—was just in the same—a charming thing, only

it was broken up. When the Dook, you know—rather too much. But you will come. A charity! She has taught the girls, and they are bringing the men,—young McKerchier, and the others. Just take two tickets and drop in for half an hour. Do us a charity. The poor girl is quite desponding; for, to tell you the truth, the tickets have *not* gone off yet, and the rooms in advance before the door's opened; so positively, unless we can put together our seven and sixpences, the whole thing will become very awkward indeed—for me, indeed."

Mrs. Tillotson had her purse out in a moment. She never could refuse Mr. Tilney's requests. Besides, she was fond of music. She opened the door, and he got in. They drove aside of the square—round—and were set down at the concert-room's door. A modest little placard, in red letters, announced "Miss Amelia Bellman's Matinee, under distinguished patronage." But there was no crush. The entrance was quite clear. A few dropped in. Miss Bellman gave lessons to a few genteel people about Mr. Tilney's neighbourhood, and indeed there was more gentility than skill in her teaching. Herbesthal, a fair London pianist, had promised to play a couple of pieces for her, and Miss Shulbrick, the well-known contralto, to sing "Willie's Wedding," the popular and arch melody by "Mirabel," whoever she was. Still her little hall was a hopeless and desponding sight. The audience was so scattered, it depressed the hearts of the pianist and contralto. The Tilneys had all come, and Mr. McKerchier, who yawned without concealment through the performance, and pronounced the whole thing "the greatest rot going;" though, at the same time, it is a fact that he did not discharge his little liability for the ticket, which fell upon the Tilney family. Herbesthal and Shulbrick, looking round on the couple of dozen or so of audience, took care to show them that they were not accustomed to such scanty attendance. Miss Bellman's papa, an ancient singing-master of repute, but long since turned out into a paddock, had put on harness again for his daughter's benefit, and consented to give "The Death of Nelson," after the declamatory model of the late Mr. Braham. This old gentleman accompanied himself, but, as it were, turned his back on his piano, leaning over confidentially to the audience, to tell the story of the great naval engagement of which Englishmen are not unreasonably proud, as if over the side of a vessel. How his eyes shut and opened as he dwelt on a long note, how his voice rose and fell, how he spoke passages, and how with a nautical triumph not untinged with grief at the loss of the hero, he proclaimed that our grateful country had "confessed" that every man that day had done his "*dee*-yewty,"—a pronunciation almost inevitable, and not to be charged to a deficiency on the part of Mr. Augustus Bellman, as any one will find who essays the declamation of that fine lyric. It was very long, but the scanty audience—out of pity and sympathy for the unhappy *bénéficiaire*—stayed out the

whole programme with surprising endurance. It grew to be dark. Besides the arch "Willie's Wedding," Miss Shulbrick, in her horny charnel-house contralto, gave the "Children's Grave;" words by Wellesley Cayley, Esq.; music by "Effie," who was understood to be a lady composer that moved in fashionable life, and whose "efforts" professors were always proud to be allowed to chant. The pianist gave a couple of little "things" of his own:

The Grasshopper, Op. 6.
Icicles } *Herbesthal.*

Wonderful little bits of piano pantomime, where the trained ear could distinctly hear chirruping, and where, in the second piece, long sustained notes like a bell were intended to convey the idea of the cold "monotonous" icicle; and after this the audience rose to go.

It was late, and had grown dark. Mrs. Tillotson had sat with her friends listless and absent. This was not the music for *her*. These tricky songs, by feeble amateurs, which leaven too many of our concerts, were what she shrank from. Once, indeed, at Mr. Bellman's blinking eyes, and face stretched away from his piano, as he told of England's generous admission that every man on that day had done his "*dee*-yewty," she could not forbear smiling. As the lamps were "turned down," and Miss Shulbrick was singing the "Children's Grave," somewhere down towards her waist-buckle, Mrs. Tillotson, sinking back in her seat with a sigh of weariness, heard a whisper at her ear which made her start. There were several empty benches behind her, and a gentleman had just come in and placed himself close to her. She turned round with a start.

"Why do you persecute me in this way?" she said, agitated. "Go away, I entreat. You don't know the mischief that you are doing. You are bringing ruin and misery upon me."

"This is a public concert," he said coolly, "is it not? I have given my seven and sixpence to Miss Bellman. Bring ruin on you! no, not for worlds, Ada; not for my own life. Bring ruin on you!—who shall do that? Who shall cause you a moment's trouble of mind? Tell me, and if any one dares——"

She grew alarmed, and looked round eagerly.

The concert was now ending. It was raining, and the audience, at last released, hurried away. With Mrs. Tillotson Ross came out, still pouring his incoherent words into her ear. She was only thinking of how she could most speedily get to her carriage.

"Take my arm," said Ross, "d'ye hear? I'll see you to your carriage. What! are you afraid? I don't care who sees us. Come."

They were nearly alone, as the company had all but gone. Suddenly a hand was laid on Ross's arm, and Mr. Tillotson's worn and weary face, with eyes that gleamed with a sort of slow fire, was between them. He did not speak to Ross.

"You will come with me," he said to her. "It is time you should come home straight;" and almost with some roughness, at least with quickness, he drew her away.

His arm trembled. Ross's cheeks blazed up with fury.

"All this is the ruin and misery which you spoke of. This is our tyrant, it seems. For shame of you to treat a lady—a girl—in that way! You set up to give lessons in chivalry and amiability."

"I don't wish to speak to you," said Mr. Tillotson, white as a sheet, and with a voice that trembled. "Don't come in my way, I warn you! This is not the place for such talk. Come," he said almost fiercely to Mrs. Tillotson; "you do not wish to have a scene here. Perhaps you have planned all this. Come, I say—I cannot bear this longer."

"Yes, let us go," she said hurriedly.

"This is *brutal*," said Ross, stepping in front of them. "How dare you treat that gentle creature this way! By Heaven, I have a mind to give you a lesson here on this very spot. So this is your new game—tyranny over a helpless girl, who is now victimised to you for her life!" Ross was gradually working himself into a fury. "I tell you, let me once hear that you dare say a rude word to her, or give her a moment's trouble or discomfort, or attempt to play the tyrant, by——, half an hour after, I'll come to the house and make you answer it! I will, by——! So that's what you have taken to now, you poor, white-faced, skulking fellow—tyrannising over women!"

Mr. Tillotson's answer was a look of deep and almost hopeless reproach to his wife.

"This from you!" he said. Then turned to Ross. "This is too great an outrage,—far too great. I have borne too much from you, and you shall hear more of this. But I give you one warning besides: if you attempt to interfere by word, or look even, with me or any one belonging to me; if you dare to come near my house, or to address a single word to her or to me again, in reference to the way I may behave to my wife, as sure as I live you shall repent it, just as I made you repent it one night down at St. Alans!"

Mrs. Tillotson wrung her hands bitterly. "Oh, how is all this to end?" she cried.

Ross could not answer for a moment. He was half-stupefied. "Ah, you threaten me with *that!*" he cried. "Don't think it for a moment. I am your master; I have but to lift up my finger and I can make you tremble, and your miserable soul quake within you! I tell you again, I watch over *her*, and shall watch over and protect her against your tyranny. Listen, one whisper. Come here." And he drew Mr. Tillotson over to the wall. He put his hand up to cover his own mouth and whispered, then drew back with a smile of triumph. Mr. Tillotson shrunk away from him with a start of terror; his pale face had become yet more ashy pale.

"Shall I?" repeated Ross, with a tone of triumph. "Shall I *now?* Now mind, you have had warning. Let me hear but of a single word to *her*, a look, a gesture, and I sha'n't spare you. Once I tell *that*, a man of your sensitive and *delicate* position may bid adieu to respect. Ah, ah, my friend Tillotson, that was an indiscreet allusion of yours to that St. Alans' night. So mind now, you have had fair warning. And, Ada, you now have a protector at last."

Neither husband nor wife, both crushed and overpowered, could say a word. The miserable Tillotson stood there against the wall.

The keeper of the rooms came now to warn them that it was time to "shut up." Ross was gone, and Mr. and Mrs. Tillotson went out mechanically to their carriage. He put her in. With a sudden impulse, Ada, looking at his hopeless face, said almost despairingly, "Don't mind this, don't think of it; I do not mind him in the least, or his threats. I will explain all to you now. Come!"

But he shook his head, and with compressed lips said:

"No. It is all over *now*." Then shut the door and turned away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFUSION

THE cruel furies had now finally entered into that house. Friends, acquaintances, servants particularly, were all coming to the knowledge of there being something wrong. This truth might be gathered from Mr. Tillotson's worn and despairing face, and all his friends told him that if he didn't take care "he must break down."

He had but one purpose, which he was carrying out.

About ten days later, the Captain came limping up with a very bright face and a sense of importance quite unusual with him. He asked for Mrs. Tillotson, but she was out. Mr. Tillotson was, as usual, in his study. "Egad, that'll do me as well," said the Captain, getting off his high-collared coat. "And how have you been yourself, Martha? I declare you are looking as young as you were six years ago. You'll see, Martha, that no one runs away with my third leg. Egad, it's better to me than number two leg!" He then went into the study.

He started back when he saw his friend. "My God, my dear fellow, what have you been doing to yourself? What's all this?"

"Sit down, my dear Captain," said the other, "this is very kind of you. I have so few friends now—well, and how are you?"

"But," said the Captain, in real distress, "this isn't the thing at all, at all. Why, you've two pink spots here the size of half-a crown. Ah, now," added the Captain testily, "this is the old thing again, playing the deuce with yourself. It'll end badly, I tell you."

"I hope so, and soon," Mr. Tillotson answered with a dismal smile; "the sooner the better, and the happier. It is wearing me out, however, fast enough."

"*What*, in the name of God?" repeated the Captain, with wide opening eyes.

"It's no use going over it now," said the other. "It's too far gone for *that*. No use talking of it, for the end is not far away."

"Ah, I know well enough," said the Captain, still impatiently; "I do. Those old stories of suspicions,—I declare I'm getting ashamed o' you, Tillotson; I am indeed. A fine, sensible, long-headed fellow as I always took you for, to be giving in to such things. If it was an old woman like me, indeed."

"My dear Captain," said the other sadly, "I am all you say; "but this is a thing you cannot follow."

"Surely don't I know it as well as that I was born?" said the Captain with the same warmth. "It's all along of that dear sweet girl that loves you, though you won't think so. My dear friend, trust an old woman like me. Once you take what they call the green-eyed fellow into your head, it's all gone with you. I could tell you a story of that about Bouchier, as nice and open-hearted a fellow as ever put on a shako, and who married as elegant a woman as you could pick out. My dear fellow, that young woman loved him as well as you'd love your father or mother; and Bouchier took it into his head to be jealous of a little major we had, a creature with no harm in him. Ah, but this is one of Tom's long stories; but it didn't end well, and that's what you're coming to."

"I dare say not," said Mr. Tillotson gloomily; "neither will this end well. But I have done with explanations; I have only too certain proof. Oh, Diamond, to think of her, for whom I have suffered so much!—to think of her first deceiving me, and then plotting with adventurers to ruin and expose her husband! Of course I was a fool, and knew very little of life, to think that she would get to love me."

"Folly, folly, folly!" said the Captain, moving restlessly on his chair. "She dotes on you,—you, Sir. I know it. And as for all these suspicions, I have got something with me that will prove what I say—what Tom says. The fact is, my dear boy, we are going to get that wild scamp out of the country."

The other started

"Ah, ah!" said the Captain with triumph. "*That's* something like! Is old Tom the Boijo after that?" Then he proceeded to

tell how he had applied to General Cameron and other friends, and how, only last night, he had got an answer from "the General," who was "as fine a trump of a man as ever pulled a belt."

"Look here, Tillotson, just listen to this," said the Captain, getting on his specs; "he's a true blue;" and the Captain read:

"My Dear Diamond,—I got yours in the country here, where it was sent on to me. I was very glad to see your old hand-writing, my dear Tom, and indeed I have not forgotten you or the old Fiftieth days."

"Now what did I always say of Cameron?" the Captain went on, taking down his specs to make the remark, "a high-up feller like him, as is now a governor-general with aiderkongs, and all—no less—just writing as when he was a little captain!"

"I am very glad you have thought of your old friend Cameron; only I wish to Heaven you'd ask something for yourself, and not—as you always were doing—for some one else."

"*That*," said the Captain apologetically, "is his fun, you know."

"Of course, we shall do something for your friend. They are organising a new mounted-police force at the island, and want a dashing savage fellow who has been in the army. From what you say, I dare say your fellow would be just the thing for a captain. The island will give a good salary—eight hundred. So I tell you what. I shall be in town on Monday, and do you come to me at the club, and take your bit of dinner, and we'll talk it over, and also the poor fellows that we all knew in the old 'half-hundred' and had such nights with."

"There," said the Captain, folding it up,—"there's a man and a soldier. I am afraid that sort of thing is gone out now. Think of a high-up fellow like that—in the Bath too, and his aiderkongs about him—recollecting an old spanchilled foosterer in lodgings like me! Well, let me tell you now. I went off at once this morning, lame leg and all, to that fellow Ross, and saw him too; and faith, didn't he take to it at once, though it suited him to a hair, he said, as I thought it would. I knew he'd like riding about the country and hunting down the rascals. The place is absolutely bespoke for him. And he's ready to go in a week."

Mr. Tillotson's face cleared again. Something like pleasure came into his face. "If this be so," he said, "why, indeed, there is some hope. "But what will *she* say; do you suppose she will consent?"

"My dear friend," said the Captain eagerly, "a bit in your ear, my boio. Why, it's all *her* doing! Planned every bit of it, lock, stock, and barrel. She came to me and proposed it, and we put our heads together, and mapped it all out."

There was a sort of groan from Mr. Tillotson. "Ah, exactly, I thought so; it only wanted that."

"My God!" said the Captain, aghast, "what's this now?"

"I see it all!" said the other, excitedly; "a well-contrived scheme, to be sure: how dull of me! Can't you follow? Oh Heaven, Heavens! Can't she leave me at once; go away without torturing me in this way? This is conclusive. But I shall baffle them yet; I shall not be pointed out, or laughed at by the world."

"My God, what are you talking of?"

"I see it all. Listen. Not three weeks ago, she came to me with a proposal to go off to Italy, *by herself*, do you see, for her pleasure or health. Now she proposes that *he* is to go. Don't you follow? She is loathing the life she leads now, she is losing all restraint, and takes care to let me see that she cannot endure my presence. She even affects to turn away her eyes and to shudder when I pass her by. And all I have suffered for her! Is it not cruel, cruel?"

He seemed to the Captain to speak like a frantic man. His hands shook, and a sort of light gleamed in his eyes. All the Captain's common forms of comfort forsook him, and he sat staring at his friend quite aghast.

"Now I have discovered the plot—thanks to you, my dear friend," continued Mr. Tillotson, pacing up and down furiously; "and just in time. Not a word now, as you value my happiness. I shall watch them. It is all clear as daylight; this explains everything."

"But what makes you think so?" said the Captain.

"Everything!" answered the other fiercely. "*You* cannot know. They have kept me in the dark all this time. She married me under a pretence of liking me; and I was fool enough to trust her! Why, in that desk this moment *are letters of his;* frantic lover's letters, written years ago! They kept all this from me; but they shall keep nothing else. And, worse than that, you know that old business which has been the misery of my life. God knows, I have tried to atone for it; and if penitence and suffering can atone——"

"To be sure—to be sure," said the Captain. "You may say *that*, my poor fellow!"

"What do you say to a wife *turning herself into a detective, leaguing with ruffians, leaving them here,* planning it all, giving them money to *buy up my secret* from them? And she has it now, knows it all, and taunted me with it the other day. I have been deceived cruelly—betrayed; but shall be no longer. They shall not conspire to ruin and degrade me first, and then escape together."

The Captain still could not find a word to say. He was in deep pain and distress, for it seemed to him that his friend was indeed "astray." He saw, too, that it would be useless to make further protest; so he rose to go.

"How hot you are!" he said, as he took his friend's hand; "why, man, you are in a fever."

"And—and," said the other, bringing him back, "you will promise me this. You are the only one I can depend on. *You* are true; if I should get ill and become helpless, *you* will watch for me, carefully and jealously, and report every thing to me. Mind, I depend on you. For it will be *their* opportunity."

This was indeed a prophetic precaution, for all through that day Mr. Tillotson struggled with an oppressive sense of coming sickness and after a severe battle was next day unable to rise, being struck down by the rising tide of a sort of nervous fever.

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. TILNEY SERVES THE BANK.

Now began the formalities of a regular sickness. The doctors came, and among them Sir Duncan Denison, that "tip-top medical man," who was brought by the Captain. He shook his head and pointed to his own forehead. "Bad, bad, my dear Captain; therein the mind must minister to itself!" To which the Captain, listening as if they were talismans of gold, assented with an eager "Oh yes; of course, doctor;" though they seemed mysterious and unintelligible. But though suffering and for a time in danger, the patient fought a strong battle, by force of will, as it were, would not let his eyes be closed, and fought off the enervating influences of his malady with indomitable energy. At times his senses were stolen away.

Then Mrs. Tillotson, a faithful but impassive nurse, heard strange speeches from him, in which her name was mixed up, and the words "cruel," "faithless," "heartless," and with much self-accusation as being "betrayed," and the most miserable of men. She went through her duties faithfully, was the most assiduous of nurses, but with a cold impassiveness, and almost sternness.

The friends of Mr. Tillotson came frequently, seriously concerned for his state. Mr. Tilney often "dropped in," and sat in a great arm-chair down in the drawing-room; sometimes refreshing himself, and sometimes turning the chair into a pulpit, saying that man's life was but a valley of the shadow, that here we were yesterday, and to-day there we were down upon our backs like infants. There was our poor friend up there, like a flower. Even the little sparrow on the house-top, by-and-by where was it? With this train of reflection —stimulated too by other resources—Mr. Tilney began to think he

was contributing essentially to the restoration of the patient. "We are pulling him through," he would say in his arm-chair. "I thought we should get him along; I had a presentiment from the beginning."

The Captain was of far more practical ability, as, indeed, Mrs. Tillotson found. Once or twice Ross came, but was not admitted, chiefly by the Captain's firmness, who heard the angry voice in the hall, and went down himself to meet him. Indeed, the Captain seemed to have a sort of influence over him which no one else had, and always met him with a good common sense and a manly independence which awed him.

After one of these interviews the Captain came in to Mrs. Tillotson to tell her. To that lady, indeed, he was a little cold and distant of late—a distinction her nice sense of delicacy remarked at once. The Captain came to her with a sort of apology. "You know," said he, "he—poor Tillotson—so charged me to see that he did not come in, and I promised him, you know, on my book-oath. You know, my dear, it doesn't *do* while he's sick, and can't look after things himself; and indeed, now, if you would take an old fellow's advice, who has no business to give the same, you would just have done all in all with the same fellow, and send him to the right about at once. It would, indeed; and then when Tillotson gets well, and on his legs again—which he will, please God—we'll *all* turn over new leaves, and start fair and fresh."

The golden-haired girl looked at him with cold blue eyes. "So, you have caught this tone," she said sadly. "They have told *you* the story. Well, the difference is not much, nor shall it be for long."

"No, no," said the Captain, in eager protest, "nothing of the kind; only I was so sorry to see things going on in this poor sort of way. It's a miserable state of things."

"It is," said she; "but it is none of my doing. Some miserable spirit has come between him and me. I shall do my duty now, as I always *have* done by him. But after he is restored to health and strength, it shall all end. I cannot endure this treatment—these suspicions—when I am conscious of having done no wrong. I have friends, thank God, who will receive me. I have tried every thing, even to the surmounting of what few women would have surmounted. Suppose, indeed, I were *the injured one!* But, as I say, it must all end now, as I see it is hopeless to combat what is on his mind."

The Captain was aghast, and could not say a word.

She went on. "I know what I owe to myself and to my dignity. I am secure in the knowledge of my own faith and honour. I should not condescend to comply with that cruel order for not speaking to that poor outcast, Ross. While my husband is ill, I shall be all he wishes; but when he is restored he must not expect, he has no title to expect, that I should be so harsh and unkind. I *cannot* do it!"

The Captain was amazed, and could not find a word to answer. He had never heard her speak in that independent style before.

Grainger, too, came at times, and Mrs. Tillotson received him with kindness. "I have been seeing Ross," he said, "and keeping him quiet. He shall not trouble you—don't be afraid. I have talked to him again and again, and I think he rather looks forward to the prospect of going out into this wild life, if he would only take care of himself. But at this moment he is leading a strange existence, and I suppose will kill himself ultimately. However, that we can't control. I do what I can to keep him in order for your sake, Mrs. Tillotson, as I confess it openly to you. I hope now, if I can be of the slightest benefit, you will make use of me."

Still he mended, but very slowly. Mrs. Tillotson watched over him night and day. His hot fierce eyes followed her about the room, uncertain who she was. Sometimes his faint voice called her over to him, and in a whisper he said, "I depend on you. Do not let her out of your sight. I know what she is planning. It is cruel, isn't it? It is she who has reduced me to this. But promise me—watch her, Martha; put every thing down; never let her out of your sight till I get well. Then I can watch for myself."

During this illness of Mr. Tillotson's, which lasted for some weeks, the bank seemed to be proceeding to yet greater prosperity. Its shares were being quoted at higher and higher premiums, and every one went about with a sort of financial envy, saying, there was a "dashingly-managed concern; not too much old-fashioned caution, and yet they kept their eyes open." This prosperity—there could be no mistake—was all owing to the great Bushell, whose influence at the Board since Mr. Tillotson's illness had become much more felt. His advice was always put forward with many apologies, and in a deprecatory way. He had his own concerns to look after, which he said were enough for any one's head; but he could not bear to "see money lying in the street, at his feet," and not pick it up. Part of this windfall was that project of the Universal Railway Roofing Company, whose contract for the Central Railway was now signed and sealed, and "brought out." The "concession" for roofing in other gigantic works had already been granted; little pamphlets were published, dwelling on the splendid capabilities of the country, which only wanted development by British industry and British energy. This was embodied in the Roofing Company. The wretched foreigners wanted money—wanted energy; every thing, in fact, that the British capital would supply them with. It was to be an El Dorado of the first quality. Lucky Roofing Company! More lucky Foncier Company, that "brought out" the Roofing Company! And still more fortunate Bushell,—disinterested too,—who had generously "put in the way" of the Foncier one of the best jobs known at the Stock Exchange! Each share was presently at eight

per cent. before allotment. Mr. Bushell commented forcibly on each successful stage of the undertaking. "Our good friend Tillotson," he said, "would have been against all this. Not that I blame his caution. I think he was right in looking at the matter as he did; but if we had gone on, we should have been left behind, high and dry. The difference is between a beggarly five per cent., which is really not worth picking up, and twenty-five. Please God, we shall work the thing up to that yet, or my name is not Bushell. I say, how surprised our poor sick friend will be when he recovers, and finds us five per cent. better than when he went to bed!"

The members of the Board went about with an open complacency, rubbing their hands at having got such "a good thing." The great Bushell promised, indeed, to put them up to many "a good thing" before he was "done with them." Their old rival was furious at this known success; but the old rival's secretary, looking out sharply, "pooh-poohed" and "pished" the whole affair, and kept saying, "Only wait."

"Where would we all be now?" asked the great Bushell triumphantly, "if we had gone on on the old slow-coach principle? But it is nothing to what I shall do for the Foncier yet."

Under such encouragement, it was no wonder that the rest of the Board caught the enthusiasm. It was no less prompted by their secretary, who had always resented the safe, sluggish tactics of the sick chairman.

Every one connected with the City looked at the financial article in their paper, and said, with sad regret, "Ah! *there* was a thing; but, you know every thing that Bushell touches turns into gold."

Shares in the new Roofing Company were to be "allotted" by a certain day. Not a single application, it was almost sternly hinted, would be entertained after that day, even from Majesty itself. When this work was done, men went about cruelly bewailing themselves, as if they had been treated with injustice. They had asked for five hundred, and had been "put off" with two hundred; they had sent in an order for five thousand shares, and had been "fobbed off," to use the angry expression of a grand speculator, with one thousand. The grand speculator, with his hands in his breeches-pocket, made a contemptuous protest against the "high-handed" behaviour of the great Bushell. The fellow was losing his head, he said.

The success of the Foncier was the more remarkable, as at this season there was the crash of earthquakes going on among many financial undertakings. Some of them were standing in the morning, new, fresh, brilliant, and by the setting sun were only a heap of ruins. When a great tower fell, it had a fatal influence that spread far and wide, and the shock shattered innumerable little banking cottages miles away up and down the country; but the great Foncier towered above them all; and this extraordinary luck was the more remarkable as trade was much disturbed, and strikes were being

meditated in the coal-fields, and it was whispered even in the prosperous iron business.

Meanwhile Ross came again and again. Once he burst into the parlour, and insisted on seeing the Captain.

"What do they keep me out for?" he said furiously. "Am I a housebreaker? Do they think I'll steal all the furniture? Well, how's our sick man?"

"Oh, he's doing well," said the Captain. "Sir Duncan says he'll be round again in a fortnight. But I tell you what, my friend, you should be packing up now. His excellency is not a man to stand shilly-shallying. And, if you're not up to time, I can tell you——"

"Ah, Diamond!" said the other, interrupting; "I know all that. I've seen his excellency, as you call him. Would you have me go away when a dear friend is in this state, eh? *Dear* Tillotson, eh? I don't bear him malice, poor devil. I dare say he suffers enough—more than I wish him. But that poor girl up stairs, what's to become of her? And if he's dying, poor miserable creature, I'm sorry for him. But why did he always try and hunt me down? If he'd let me alone, I'd have let *him* be. Why couldn't he keep out of my way? I declare, this moment, if it would be any ease or comfort to him, I'd just walk up to his bedside and put out my hand to him. I would, though you don't think so. It would soothe the last hours of his life."

"My dear fellow!" said the Captain, in some alarm. "Not to be thought of for a moment. As for his dying, that's all over. He's mending every hour, God be thanked! Sir Duncan says he'll be out driving about in a week."

"He will, will he?" said Ross, starting up; "and beginning his old game, I suppose. No doubt. With all my heart, then. I am not sorry. Let him live as long as he can; but I'll be even with him yet, long as he lives. Things shan't all go one way, I can tell you, or there's none of that Providence old Tilney's always preaching about. What's this tyranny," he said with sudden anger, "keeping me from seeing her? Are we all children? Am I not going away? What's at the bottom of it? What are you afraid of?"

"Yes," said the Captain gravely, "you have given your promise, as a man of honour, to go. I am bound for you myself; General Cameron reckons on you."

"My dear Captain, and who says I would go back of what I say? I am dying to get away—longing to have the whipping and scourging of those savages. What a policeman I shall make! I shall put by money, come back in four or five years, and then we shall see what will become of this sham-sick Tillotson. I have seen the general. But I am not obliged to rush off to the train, and break my neck getting down to Southampton. There's lots of time yet. I give you my honour I am going, and in less than a fortnight. There, my dear

old Captain. But as for going without seeing *her*, that I will not."

"Well," said the Captain, "I think that's only fair. I knew you'd stand to what you said. And now take an old boy's advice that has seen the world. Give up all this work, and be a sensible steady fellow, and start again all fair. You'll do splendidly yet, for you have the go in you, and mark my words, will come home one of these days a tip-top fellow yet. That you will, with lots o' money too."

"Ah, *that* I will," he said fiercely; "you may depend on it. I'll work and slave and put by money, and come back one of these days and pay off all whom I owe any thing to. Pay them off splendidly, too. I'll scrape and hoard, and live decently and orderly, and even reform, Sir, all for *that*. You may depend on me. Yes, the sooner I go the better for *that*; for the sooner I'll come. I'm to fix the time for sailing to-day. I hope he'll live and get strong, and last out a few years, for all *that*." Then suddenly changing his voice, he said softly, "Ah! this is all ranting and raving, I suppose. I have only a fortnight or ten days before me to stay in old England. I've given you my word, recollect. So now, Captain, don't be harassing a poor outcast devil with watchings and spyings. I *must* see her for these few days that are left. I'll not see her for years, I can tell you. There are very few fellows would be as moderate and well-behaved as I am. So now, don't be stiff and pitiless. I'm down enough, God knows."

The Captain was moved.

"Keep up, my man," he said. "It will all do well yet. Though, as to seeing *her*, that's entirely for herself. But she'll do whatever is right, depend on it. Give me the hand, my dear lad, and keep up."

Meanwhile Mr. Tillotson had been mending slowly, but was "decidedly better." Sir Duncan, the Queen's physician, and always an "amateur" of fine women, took Mrs. Tillotson's hand in his, and said,

"Don't worry yourself, my dear, any more. He is over it all. We shall have him on his legs before a fortnight."

"There is no danger—no chance of returning danger?" asked the golden-haired lady.

"Not in the least. He'll be stronger than he was. I'll be down with him at the bank, and get him to allot me some shares before a very few days."

Mrs. Tillotson, cold, unflagging in her duty, night and day, never relaxed in her work. It had come to one evening, when she was sitting below in her drawing-room, after Sir Duncan had gone, who had said that the patient might "be sitting up" in three or four days. It was dark and growing darker, and she had sat on in her favourite attitude, her round face leant upon her hand, in a deep

reverie. Was she thinking of the course she would adopt for her future life, when things fell back to their old position? Suddenly she heard a heavy step behind her, and some one entered hastily. Though it was dark, she knew the voice.

"Ada," he said sadly, "well, it has come at last. I have to go now, and have come to say good-bye. That woman would not let me in. But I was determined——"

She listened without speaking for a moment.

"And when is this?" she asked. "When must you go?"

"To-morrow night," he said, flinging himself into a chair. "Down to Southampton. Well, they have driven me out at last, you see; I suppose they'll consider me beaten. Yet, if I had stayed here longer, I must have rotted away or starved. And now, what do you mean to do? I am doing a good deal of this for *you*, I can tell you—to let you enjoy peace and domestic happiness with him."

She sighed.

"Yes, it is for the best," she said. "You will grow wiser and more subdued, and govern yourself. In time you will forget all the past. Indeed, you have made me happy by this wise resolve. I admire your firmness and self-denial. It would have ended miserably if you had stayed."

"Ah, but," said he, with sudden ferocity, "don't be too sure that it won't yet. I am only going for a time—a few years. I have forgotten nothing, and shall forget nothing. I shall return; and if I hear a breath, a whisper of that man's treating you with unkindness, I shall come back, as I came back before. No matter how far the distance, as sure as I am alive, or if I have strength to crawl, I'll come over and punish that—*that* man. I shall reckon with him one day yet."

"Hush," said she, looking round in alarm, "this is the old insanity; but I have hope and confidence, and can forgive these wild bursts."

"Ah, that's what *you* call them," he said bitterly; "that's your name and *your* work too. Whatever I turn out, and if I end badly and violently—which I know I shall—you were the beginning and the end of it. You were,—you know it; you deceived and betrayed me."

"I?" she said, trembling.

"Yes, you," he said. "I might have been one of your steady model decent citizens, but for you. You were mine, and pledged to me from the beginning. I looked on you as mine; but you sold yourself, as many a woman has done before—was bought with his banking money; and a man that has left me this" (pointing to his scar)—"before God, I'll come back and reckon with him. Oh, Ada, how I have loved you all this time! and I tell you this one thing, you shall be mine yet, one of these days or years."

"No, no," she said, in the same mournful voice; "we have each our lot, and must go through it. All that is over now; it has come too late."

"As the tree falls, eh? Nothing of the kind; you were not born to be miserable, to be chained to that man—a wretch," he continued with growing excitement, "that if his history were once known, the common police would enter the house and drag him away to a jail. It's true, by Heaven!"

Trembling again, and with a faltering voice, she said,

"I do not want to know these things. He is my husband. Only that you are going away, I dare not listen to you."

"What prevents me," continued the other, pacing up and down furiously, "from going straight and denouncing him, now that he is lying there shivering in his bed? Better men than he have been dragged from a fever to a prison. Only you, and you alone, Ada, have kept me from this. I was thinking over it nights and nights ago. Nothing kept me but *you*, my poor, sweet, sacrificed Ada. Oh, you will never know how I have loved you! Under all my rudeness and roughness, which *you* could not understand, I did, indeed, love you; only my wretched pride would not let me show it. But what is that to you now? and how can you so patiently put up with this miserable man, whom you should learn to despise? who is beneath you morally; whom it is not fit you should stay with——"

He paused.

"It is my lot—it is my duty," she answered calmly. "This is the last time we meet, so you can speak as you will; but you know me well enough by this time to see that I am not moved by such things. We must part now; and if I am responsible, as I believe I am, through a fatal mistake, for these troubles, you will forgive me, and I shall pray for you, and we shall look forward to happier days."

At that moment the servant came in with a lamp and a letter to Mrs. Tillotson, which he set down before her. She opened it mechanically, as she had latterly done with all his letters—saw that it was headed "Foncier Bank," like a hundred such circulars and notices of board meetings, as had come regularly within the last fortnight or three weeks. She threw it from her.

"Good-bye, dearest Ross," she said, with infinite tenderness; "I have reason, indeed, to ask your forgiveness. Cease to think of me; look forward to a new and bright future, and I shall pray every day for your happiness."

Ross looked at her a moment, and then caught her in his arms. He held her there long. She was powerless to free herself.

"I cannot go," he said; "I shall not go. I cannot leave you here; or if I do, I shall end miserably, or do something desperate. It is *you* who have brought me to this."

She gave him one sad look, freed herself, and fled from the room.

"Wait—stay!" he called after her in an agony—"a moment."

But she was gone. He was pacing up and down the room in a fury. "Come back, come back!" he cried; "I can't lose you. Curse on him that has done all this cruel work! I shall be even with him yet for all this, and before I go, too, if I could find any way." And he looked round and round the room, as if for a victim.

The cheery voice of Mr. Tilney was now heard at the door. "Ross here!" he cried. "Well, well; it seems we are doing well up stairs—right well. I am very glad of it. It should be a lesson to you, my boy. When you have once anchored your hope up there in a sure and certain immortality, you are—you are," added Mr. Tilney, embarrassed by forgetting what followed, "you are—all right."

Ross scarcely heard him. "I shall be even with him yet," he was muttering.

"What's this?" said Mr. Tilney, taking up the Foncier secretary's letter; "something from my old bank. Dear me, the days when I was a director, and signing cheques like wildfire. I come and help *her* in all these business matters. What can girls know?" And Mr. Tilney got out his spectacles and prepared to read.

It was quite true that Mr. Tilney, coming to take his sherry, had said, "Now, my dear, leave Tillotson's business to me. As a sort of retired officer of the bank, it is quite appropriate. I'll get you through all this. And so he did; for when a formal circular came announcing to Mr. Tillotson that there "would be a meeting of the board to-morrow, at one o'clock," he would sit down, get out his glasses, and answer it formally, as he would an invitation. He "regretted to have to inform them that Mr. Tillotson's state of health rendered it wholly out of the question for him to attend to business," &c.

Sitting down in the arm-chair, and reading this document, with Ross pacing round the room, Mr. Tilney broke out suddenly in agitation. "My goodness! Heaven above us! What is all this?—'Involved in the most helpless manner. Salvation depends on not a whisper. Burn this——'" And Mr. Tilney, with the glasses dropping helplessly from his nose, could only turn the letter upside down, and say incoherently the words, "Providence," "Shape our ends," "Sparrow falls."

Ross had caught the words; in a second had twitched the letter from him; in a second more had read it with gleaming eyes through to the end; and while Mr. Tilney was gasping and muttering his devout commonplaces, had with a stamp and a cry of triumph rushed away.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FONCIER TOTTERS.

In the all-full rush and flush of its prosperity, with its shares at eight or ten per cent. premium, the Foncier indeed seemed to deserve the envy with which its happy course was followed. The great Bushell was now virtually acting chairman, not by force of election, but the more powerful moral influence of success and personal ability. The shareholders said to each other that, after all, it was lucky enough that Tillotson and the "slow-coach" policy had been shelved even for a time. The great Bushell himself, still modest and utterly unexcited, now and again threw out hints about a new El Dorado that would all but dazzle their financial eyes—something to which the Roofing Company was a mere flickering rushlight. *That* was a mere experiment. They were only feeling their way. The ultimate end that he saw was universal *absorption;* a gradual but gentle devouring of every existing institution of the sort; something grand and Brobdignagian, on the scale of the magnificent French undertaking which dealt with securities as easily as a Nasmyth's hammer would deal with a first-rate anchor. His colleagues were fretted and goaded by these gorgeous glimpses; and at last one day he was prevailed on to hint at a scheme for a great Persian bank "concession" from the Shah: diamonds and rich stuffs, and all the costly wares of the East, to be taken as securities; loans to the Shah and the emirs on their personal security. The whole thing was in train; but before this splendid scheme was matured, some other events were now to occur.

There had been disputes between masters and workmen in the iron country, which had now gone on for some time without settlement, until at last it came to the usual issue—a strike. This began with a mine or two, and a foundry or two, but was now spreading rapidly. The first mine-owner and the first foundry-proprietor had been beaten in the struggle, and had given in, which was only a bonus held out to the others; and soon the whole trade was "on strike."

This, it might be supposed, would only affect the unhappy proprietors seriously, and raise the price of iron kettles and hardware generally; but the secretary of the old company, looking with rage and jealousy on the progress of the Foncier, saw what profit was to be made of the affair, and began to whisper how the Roofing Company, or rather the Foncier—for it was the same thing—would carry out their contract *now*. The contract was signed long ago, a given time

fixed, and not an ounce of iron bought yet! In a few days other people began to make the same remarks, assuming that it was all true.

When the directors met the great Bushell he only smiled at them. Just what he anticipated. His agents were at work, he said, buying them up hard and fast; he only wished he had the money to buy 'em all. Let the fools sell. In a week the strike would be over; up would go their shares, and who would be holding them then? This view was all very well, but it did not reassure the men of business. A hard-headed old cashier, who had been in banks all his life, who was a sort of deputy-manager, and who had always looked grave at the "dashing" proceedings of the great Bushell, told some of the directors privately that he had made inquiries, and that the great Bushell's agent had not bought a single share of the Roofing Company; nay, that he had been eagerly offering them. In financial operations, a feather, a straw, the weight even of a bank-note, becomes a strong and substantial argument—premises most logical and irrefragable conclusion. This fact began to alarm the directors; but there was worse to come. For the rumour, whispered diligently and sent abroad by designing persons, that the Foncier and the Roofing Company were virtually one, being financially bone of each other's bone, had begun to be accepted generally; and one day it was found that the shares of the great Foncier were beginning to fall—to fall slowly, first to a less pleasing premium, then to par, and then to discount. These were indeed evil days. The gorgeous tabernacle, middle-aged Jenkinson's pigeon-holes and sentry-boxes, his arcades and plate-glass, his inverted frigate hulks, which did duty as a roof, the mahogany and magnificence within, the forty thousand paid for the site—in the face of such things imperishable grandeur and stability seemed the only association.

There was dismay in all the directors, a panic as if the cholera had come among them; and that day the great Bushell being absent, having caught a heavy cold and lumbago at a grand City dinner, the ancient cashier came with one of his ledgers, and in a calm grave way said he thought it was his duty to call the board's attention to the state of Mr. Bushell's "private account."

"For the good of the bank," it had been found expedient that the great Bushell should draw largely and without restraint; and the board now looking through his account, were startled by the enormous sums that had been drawn out and "placed" in his name. Latterly, in the unbounded enthusiasm and confidence which the success of the great Bushell had excited, his proposal to bring some of his numerous undertakings into connection with the bank had been accepted as a sort of favour. Now, in a sort of panic and flutter—though indeed there was no reasonable grounds for immediate danger—it seemed almost a certainty that there was ruin and dishonesty coming; and the lumbago and heavy cold of this Herculean

Bushell, who had often boasted that "he never had been ill in his life," seemed the worst of all the symptoms.

What was to be done? If there should get abroad even so much as a whisper of their being something wrong, so much as a breath, they were undone. The health of the most robust financial undertakings depends on an accident. The slightest east wind of a rumour, and a sort of consumption sets in. There was an uneasy consciousness, amounting almost to conviction, that affairs were in disorder; but they knew not where to begin. The first thing, however, according to the suggestion of the ancient "long-headed" cashier, was to see "how they stood." Rather, the first thing was perfect secrecy, so that not a whisper of suspicion should get abroad. And accordingly the ancient cashier came up privately, was shut up with the secretary for two or three hours, until it got to five o'clock; and by that hour they had discovered enough to make their suspicions matter of perfect certainty.

What was to be done? Some one had gone to the great Bushell, but could only see his wife at her grand house, who said that Mr. Bushell was very ill indeed, and could not be disturbed. Then they thought of Mr. Tillotson; he could restore order, or at least help, and they wrote off a hasty note, which was to this effect:

"(Private.) Foncier Bank, Five o'clock.

"My Dear Tillotson,—We have been looking into the affairs of the bank, and have made some discoveries which you should know of. I hear you are well enough to see people. I mean to call upon you about nine o'clock to-night, if you will admit. I cannot go into detail here, but I will only say that Bushell seems to have involved us in the most helpless manner. Things, however, I trust will turn out better. But our whole salvation depends on not a whisper getting abroad until we can see our way. So burn this the instant you have read it. For I hear that Smith is going about shaking his head, and saying things about us. But I need not caution *you*. I need not remind you that your fortune stands or falls with ours; that your means are bound up with ours, and that we must all stand or fall together."

This was the letter that Mrs. Tillotson had opened so carelessly, and dismissed as a sort of formal circular for the routine Foncier's meeting. This, alas, was the letter that she had left down on the table when she quitted the room after parting with Ross; and this was the letter on which Ross's furious eyes fell, which he read, the perusal of which made him quit the room in triumph.

Late that night arrived the secretary, anxious and feverish. Could he see Mr. Tillotson? He had made an appointment by letter. It

was about the bank. But Mr. Tillotson was worse,—could not see any one, especially on business. The doctor had given strict orders. Well, then, could he see Mrs. Tillotson?

Mrs. Tillotson came down with pale and compressed lips. She had indeed gone to her husband shortly after Ross had left. "Now," she said to herself, "all is at an end, happily. I shall go through what is my duty to the very end. Now that poor Ross is gone it will be easier; and he will have no cause for complaint."

On the stairs she met that grim servant, Martha Malcolm, coming down from his room, who gave her one of her hard stony looks, that latterly reached almost to disrespect. Mrs. Tillotson had now begun to have an instinct that this woman had been watching and spying upon her

Mr. Tillotson was sitting in his chair weak and helpless; but his eyes seemed fiery, and almost glared at her as she entered. "What is it now?" he said. "Do you wish for anything?"

"Nothing," she answered calmly. "I came to see how you were, and to read to you."

He almost laughed. "To read to me?" I do not deserve all this devotion. No, indeed. How I am? You can see I am as well or as ill as people can desire. You can take back that news, my dear, to those who will be most concerned to hear it. I shall be ill very, very long, I fear, and so shall tax your patience; but it must end, you know, eventually. But then an illness and seclusion has its advantages for *others*. But I shall make an effort to-morrow, in God's name, and get up and come down, and go about and look after my own house. Yes, I shall, if I am to die in the attempt, since there are those so cruel, and heartless, and deceptive as to *take advantage of my miserable state*. Go away, as a favour; do. Leave me now, please. I begin to talk so oddly. But I am tired, and want rest."

In terror, but with sympathy in her face, she went up to him to soothe him. He half rose as she came near. "Don't, don't," he said. "I don't ask it from you. Keep it for others. Go, go now, as a favour."

He grew so agitated that, with a sigh, she went away softly. Listening a moment at the door, she heard him groaning in an agony of mind. "My God," he said, "what are we to do?" Going down, it was then that she heard of the bank secretary being below, and saw him.

That gentleman was cautious, but very pressing; but she was equally firm. Mr. Tillotson could not see any one that night. It was as much as his life was worth. The secretary said that the occasion was pressing and serious, and that it was all-important for Mr. Tillotson's own sake. But she was not to be moved. In the morning, then? It was agreed finally that the secretary should come the first thing in the morning, and "then I must really see him, Mrs. Tillot-

son, or the matter will be serious. I don't like hinting more, even to you."

But in the morning, Mr. Tillotson, having had a wretched tossing night, was infinitely worse. The Queen's physician had been sent for, and had said, "What's all this? I hope you have kept him quiet, and away from any thing to disturb his mind?" and his eye settled a little coldly on that "fine woman," Mrs. Tillotson, whom he had several times "had his eye on" when he found Ross lounging insolently about the drawing-room. The bank secretary arrived early, saw the doctor's carriage, and was told the state of the case.

"What is to be done, then, Mrs. Tillotson?" said he. "I may as well tell you now, there is something wrong in our bank. We have been half the night going through the books, and I can only say we are in a bad way. Unless we have a very large sum before a few days, and if there is a breath gets abroad, we may as well close the doors."

She started. "Can this be true?"

"I wrote him all this yesterday," said the secretary. "Of course you saw it?"

"Never," she said. "Yes, there was some letter came from the bank, but I thought it was one of the circulars——"

"He should have seen it at once," said the secretary impatiently. "I hope it has not been left. As I say, if so much as a whisper got abroad, there would come a rush, and we would be undone. Only a few days' time, and a sum of money to ease present liabilities and the crash of that miserable Roofing Company, and we are safe."

She ran to the drawing-room to find the letter, but she searched in vain. It was gone. It was indeed far away from that house. The very night that it had been taken away it was read by other eyes. Ross had once, with his friend Grainger, "done some business" with the rival bank. They had seen the secretary, and been loud in abuse of the Foncier—a strain never unwelcome to the ears of that officer. This had led to a sort of acquaintance; and Ross on this night, talking aloud to himself, exultant, jubilant, had hurried along to that secretary's house, had seen him, and been made welcome.

With the morning the fatal news was abroad. The rival secretary had dined out the night before at a financial dinner-party, and had there with much mystery and complacency insinuated his news. Such financial secrets are never told out like vulgar news; they are put in the shape of shrugs and hints. "Bad business this. You have heard what's going round, of course. Worst authority, of course. But putting two and two together, and once the roofing business gave way, any one could see. Heard about Bushell, their strong man? not been seen for days; ill, they say, and Tillotson ill too. No wonder."

These hints led to disclosures in a sort of private interview, over the claret, between the rival secretary and a great financial chairman, with whom the rival secretary was anxious to stand well. With him he was quite explicit.

"It's all true, Mr. Wick," he said. "Bushell's in America or Norway by this time, and he'll pull them all down." This news was received by the chairman with, "My goodness! seemed always a sound thing. Pity about Bushell though—a fine head for business. Wish we had him. When he has pulled through all this we might open to him."

But by next morning the town knew the story. In the City Articles of all the papers were mysterious hints perfectly intelligible to those who were acquainted with the Stock Exchange cabala, and before the bank opened its doors the secretary and officials saw with dismay a crowd of people and a file of carriages ready waiting to assail them. This they did not care for in itself; but it was the dangerous significance and what it portended that they dreaded. The truth burst on them. They had been betrayed, or rather it was hopeless to keep such a secret. As for the Roofing Company, that was gone hopelessly, and no one thought of it now. It was a financial corpse, and the sooner the remains were got away and buried, even with indecent haste, the better. But as soon as business began on the Exchange it was evident that a panic had set in about the stock of the GREAT FONCIER COMPANY, and its shares were racing down from the great premium to par, and from par to a discount that was growing like a fatal chasm every moment. Thus are the healthiest financial frames, like human constitutions, apparently healthy and robust, struck down in a moment by apoplexy or paralysis.

These were hurried, almost ghastly, times for the Foncier Bank; a flutter, hurried meetings, more hurried investigations, proposals for "winding-up," for prosecution, and investigation. There were meetings of angry shareholders, and a leading article in the great journal, pointing the moral and showing us all what we were to learn from the instance of the Foncier collapse. The gorgeous building—the masterpiece of "Middle-Age Jenkinson"—stood there desolate and closed; and even its finery and magnificence gave it an air like the jewelry on a thief or pickpocket. While this convulsion was going on, Mr. Tillotson, utterly unconscious of the wreck, was mending again slowly. It was more by a mental effort; and there was an eager vitality about him which made him triumph over sickness. But Mrs. Tillotson he motioned from his room with flashing eyes. When he spoke, he said gently, "Don't come to me. You will only expose yourself to danger. Don't let us be acting any longer; and when I get well, I promise you——"

She would only make a grieved protest, and then began to sit

lonely and solitary below in her drawing-room. In three or four days more Sir Duncan said, "We are doing much better, but must be cautious;" and that morning the secretary to the bank came, and was allowed to see him. He told Mr. Tillotson the whole story of the late break-up. "It will take a long time to set right; for we shall be in a perfect mess of law, and winding up, and references, and the rest. We sha'n't save a sixpence out of the smash. It is very unlucky; for if the panic hadn't come, and you'd been on your legs, we'd have pulled through even in spite of the Roofing, &c., and that schemer, Bushell."

Mr. Tillotson heard all the details with an indifference that seemed amazing to the secretary. "Well, you are wonderful," he said, "Tillotson; a true philosopher; just the man for a chairman. I always——But what made you publish the business when I cautioned you so? 'Pon my word, I believe that was what brought it all about."

"I published nothing," said the other wearily. "I knew nothing to publish."

"Oh, yes," said the other. "You told that man Ross, or gave him my letter, and he showed it to that churl Marshall, and didn't Marshall lose no time in spreading it abroad? A thorough man of business that. Out of curiosity, Tillotson, why did you do that?"

"Ross showed it!" said Mr. Tillotson, with eyes brightening; "how could he get it?"

"The very point," said the secretary; "how could he get it? I wish," he said, rising, "we could have seen you a week ago. Things would have been all square now. I declare I am quite sorry for the poor old Foncier, and get a squeeze about here whenever I pass it by. Not that it affects me—I have had a dozen offers already, and good ones. Good-bye."

Mr. Tillotson was not listening to him. His eyes were fixed on a point on the wall opposite, in an eager speculation. In a moment he rang the bell. "Send up Martha Malcolm," he said.

That grim attendant came up. "Martha," he said, "I want you to try and recollect something that happened during my illness. Try, now, for it is all-important. Was there any letter came here from the bank about four days ago? Try."

Martha answered promptly, "There was. I brought it up myself, and gave it to *her*."

"To her?" he repeated, starting.

"And she opened it and read it, and Mr. Ross was sitting there beside her; and that was the day that what I told you of already took place."

"Yes, yes," he said, almost panting with feverishness; "I remember it. It is quite clear. Thank you, thank you, Martha; you have helped me wonderfully. I never can repay to you all that I owe you; but I shall find some way, as indeed I should" he added

despairingly, "to the *only, only* friend I seem now to have in this house."

When she was gone he burst into an agony, tossing his arms wildly. "This is all clear; this is *all* clear now. I want nothing now. And what did I do to her that she should enter into this base, this cruel conspiracy? Because I come between her and her love, she thinks she cannot punish me enough. She has got my secret, and she has ruined me, and now she wishes to wear and harass me into the grave, that the ground may be clear! But I shall disappoint them," he said, starting up. "I shall make one struggle yet. But I have no one—no one—to watch for me, to help me. I am alone, and abandoned here to their mercy."

CHAPTER XXI.

A WEARY NIGHT.

He thought a good deal, and suddenly the faithful, trusting image of the Captain presented itself. With a sort of joy he sent for him; and very soon that true officer was limping steadily to his friend's bed-room; and he was greatly shocked at the alteration in his friend's face, and the worn, wasted look, and at the same time the quick, feverish fire that was in it. But wishing to give comfort, as usual, he protested that he never saw a man "who had plucked up so well."

Mr. Tillotson shook his head sadly. "You have heard, of course," he said, "of the bank. Not that I mind it. It has half ruined me—not that I mind that. There are other things that are wearing me down. You are my friend,—the only one I have left now,—and you will promise to stand by me now. May I rely on you?"

"Indeed yes," said the Captain, warmly; "that you may, my boy—heart, soul, body, and bones, and the old leg too, such as it is! I declare to God, I wish I could do more, Tillotson; but I know there is a hundred or so at home, and fifty that Tom M'Murdo has: and I dare say, with the pay as security——"

"No, no, my dear Captain," said the other gratefully, "not that. You are too good—far and away. We have plenty left. But you can help me in another way—much more important."

Then he began to tell the story of his certainties, his suspicions, all in detail—the letter, the discovery of his private history. It was so circumstantial and so convincing that the good Captain stood aghast, and had not a protest to make.

"Egad, Tillotson," he said ruefully, "I don't know what to say."

"But I tell you what we must do," said the other. "I rely on you—on you only; you are my only friend—you won't desert me. You will see me through it. For God's sake, promise me. Just think of me, a miserable, dying, abandoned man, with an unkind, faithless wife—oh, Heaven, how I have loved her, and love her now!—plotting and plotting to destroy me. But I can't look on. I owe something to my own dignity—I *can't* let it go further. I must save her still—save her in spite of herself—and then I can die in peace."

"Save her?" said the Captain, wondering.

"Yes, save her. Don't you see to what all this points? That Ross—she says he is gone. I know better. He is not on shipboard yet. The vessel does not sail till to-morrow night. We must watch her, and I rely on you. Don't desert me."

This idea did not seem probable to the Captain, but the other urged it with an eagerness that was frantic. The Captain at last became shaken, almost staggered, by the consistency of his friend's proofs.

"You will stay with me as much as you can," said the other eagerly; "as long as you can manage. Who else have I to look to? Don't abandon me in this. Let us join and save *her* from destruction."

The Captain, full of deep pity, agreed with all his heart and soul, and went away promising to be back in a "short half hour." And thus set in a strange and most eventful day; certainly the most important and unfortunate in its fruits of all those that have trespassed on the reader's patience in the course of this narrative. Yet no one was guilty—no one was in fault; but all seemed hurried on by some piteous misunderstanding, and it did seem as though the old Greek "necessity"—that cruel fate—was revived again, and working out all the mischief of this unhappy day. It had set in a dark, iron-toned day, gloomy and chilling, with an east wind flying round corners like steel arrows. Many an ancient chest was pierced on that day, and went home charged with miserable coughs and asthma.

There is no need to dwell very long on its details. The Captain returned even more promptly than he had promised. In the drawing-room, a little to his embarrassment, he met Mrs. Tillotson. "I am coming to stay with our invalid for the day. Tom's poor Company enough, Heaven knows! But he likes it, poor fellow."

Mrs. Tillotson, still sitting in a reverie, with her hand to her pale face, answered coldly, "Ah, I know. I understand. He does not care to see me. However, in this life there are ends for all things, which are sure to come. When this illness has passed away, we shall see."

"Well, now," said the Captain gravely, "to say the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, all this is a sore pity. It is, indeed. It's

a heart-breaking business, and it's all—all from a little foolishness and folly; nothing short of it. No, indeed. Though I must say poor Tillotson has done his best all through, poor fellow. After all, my dear, what's his sin, except in liking you from the very bottom of his heart, as I can take my book-oath to before any magistrate? And knowing that, I think it's a pity now. And, after all, it was very well when a girl, and all that. But now that Ross is going, or as good as going——"

She rose, and almost awed the Captain with her stately look. "So you have joined in it!" she said. "I am grieved for this. I thought *you* were better and kinder. No matter. What can I expect? I am prepared for everything. But you must not ask me to listen to this. Let those who suspect justify themselves, and use all the means that suspicion uses. I disdain to say a word that would make all clear as noonday. Let those who have taken the course they have find and discover for themselves. I shall not explain, nor say a word, nor alter my course in the slightest. I have some dignity, to which I owe this."

She left him. The Captain was in a mystery of wonder and puzzle. "Egad, she spoke like a novel," he said. "And her dignity too! My goodness! Women, the creatures! I never was or could be up to them. But it's a poor pitiful case altogether. And she spoke very fair; on my word and credit she did." Then he went up and joined his friend.

That day dragged on slowly. It grew almost dark, and the east wind still came with more fierceness round the corners. Stout and strong old gentlemen found their faces contorted as they felt themselves pierced through and through, and that night cowered over the fire. It was a miserable day for young and old.

About four o'clock her carriage came to the door, according to custom. She had been sitting the whole day with her face on her hand, in a sort of dismal dream or reverie. Then, from a kind of pride, she determined to go through her usual routine of life, make no change whatever, and so went up stairs to dress. She came down a sad statue, floated out, and drove away.

Now were the lamps lighted in the street. The air had grown yet more steel-coloured. Yet, according to her mechanical routine, which she disdained to alter, she went into the park, and drove round and round. What was she thinking of in that drive? Of cruel suspicions, where she had been only too faithful and devoted, and where *she*, if the whole truth were but known, had reason to feel injured? Or was she thinking of Ross, the poor outcast, whose ship was lying in the dock, and was to put to sea to-morrow, and whom she was never to see again? Defiant when she felt innocent, she disdained concealment; and a letter of hers to him—a farewell one, which she had promised to write—was lying on the hall table, open and unconcealed, and left there to be posted. Above, the

invalid and his friend sat by the fire, and now scarcely spoke in the darkness. At last the Captain went away.

About five o'clock came a ring at the door, and Martha Malcolm opened it to that Mr. Grainger who used to come there. He said, hurriedly, he wished to see Mrs. Tillotson on very important business —must see her at once. Where was she then? The grim servant told him with a sort of alacrity where he was likely to find her, and he hurried away. Then she got her own shawl and bonnet, and herself posted out in the same direction.

She got to the park. She had not to wait long. There were but few carriages there, and she soon recognised the Tillotson brougham. Mrs. Tillotson was sunk back in her reverie, with dejection in her fine face. Martha saw her pass, and in a moment saw her carriage stop and Mr. Grainger at the window.

Her thoughts were, indeed, far away, full of misery and pride, and yet of sympathy. Suddenly she found her carriage had stopped; and in a moment a gentleman's face was at the window.

"I beg your pardon for this," he said eagerly; "but I have just been to the house, and followed you here. Don't be alarmed, but there is a serious thing just happened."

"To whom?" she said, in a flutter.

"I was going down myself to-night," he said, "to see poor Ross, when this telegram reached me. It is a miserable state of things. There is no light to read it. But I can give the substance. He says he was set on by some Americans last night about the docks and beaten. (Poor, poor fellow! I know what all that means; it was some quarrel that he cannot keep out of.) And then he says—these are his own words—'Give her this message: tell her if I could see her before I died—which I dare say I shall before morning—it would make me very happy. Implore her to come to me, for I have much to tell her. But I know she dare not do it.'"

"Now," said Grainger, "I can speak with more knowledge than he has. I believe that, conscious that there is nothing but humanity in the case, you *do* dare to do it. Am I right?"

"Poor, poor Ross!" she answered in an agony of sympathy. "I knew it would come to this in the end. What am I to do? Yes, I do dare to do it."

"Then, if so," he said, speaking very hurriedly, and looking at his watch, "there is not a second to be lost. There is not twenty-five minutes to catch the train. There is no time to go home. You can go to-night, and be up again early in the morning. Shall I tell you what to do? Write, write; here is a slip—write to your husband, and tell him the true state of the case without concealment. When the dying call us, there can be no absurd scruples. I shall not go with you, for fear of any remark. Or suppose we drive to the next stationer's; you can write there, and I shall go home with it, see your husband,

and tell him how it is. Recollect it is a dying man calls for you—calls you to his bedside."

It seemed noble, and a work of charity, and a strange enthusiasm came and filled her. After a second's deliberation, "Yes," she said, "I shall go."

She got in, and they drove away to the stationer's. Martha Malcolm was standing there, and saw it all. Then turned and went home. As the stationer was about shutting up, a lady and gentleman entered, called hurriedly for pen and paper, and the lady wrote a hasty letter.

"We may send away the brougham," said the gentleman, "and take a cab. The servants have enough to talk of without these things. Recollect, charity and the dying! You will have scruples on the journey, but reassure yourself with those words. Now I shall take charge of this, and promise to deliver it at the house in half an hour. You will be there in two or three hours at most. Good-bye, Mrs. Tillotson. God speed you for this generous action! Wait. This is an awful night. You will be destroyed with the cold. Here is a shawl-shop. We can get something here—rugs and everything."

At the South Western Station, the express was all but ready. Already the bell had rung. There was the dropping musketry of closing doors; the engine was dripping dew, and blowing off white clouds like an impatient racer; the station-master was looking up and down, when a lady came fluttering through the doorway, quite against the regulations; for the door had been shut. But that gorgeous gold hair and that piteous and most musical soft face were not to be resisted by mortal porter, still less the temptation that was forced into his hand. In a second, a door was opened, the lady was put in, and the Southampton night express had rumbled out, as if it was kicking and pawing the ground, into the night and the very heart of the bitter east wind.

Mr. Grainger, faithful to his engagement, went straight to Mr. Tillotson's house. He asked to see the master, was refused, and then handed to Martha Malcolm the hastily-written letter. It was not sealed; it was not in an envelope. She took it. She herself had only come in a moment before. When he was gone, she opened it, thought for a few moments, read it, and then, with one of her grim smiles, *tore it up.*

For an hour later there was silence in the house, and Mrs. Tillotson had not returned. Towards seven, Martha Malcolm went up to Mr. Tillotson with some light refection, such as he made a feint of taking, and told him—was it not her duty?—that Mrs. Tillotson had not come home. A flush came into the pale face, and the thin hands pressed the ends of his chair as he heard this news. But he was unable to speak.

"And the carriage," Martha went on, "has come home without her."

Mr. Tillotson half rose. "Come home without her—her?" he repeated.

"Come home without her. Yes. Come without her. I knew it was coming to this; I knew it would end in this way from the day that you married her. I said it, and it has come true."

"But she will return?" he gasped.

She shook her head. "No; she has left you. I knew she would. She thought no one was watching her. She sent away the carriage, and took a cab. But I followed her, and took another. She is gone."

"You followed her," he almost gasped, "and where? Tell me at once. No concealment, woman."

Martha Malcolm paused a moment, then lifted her long fingers, and pointed as if in the direction of the town. "'*Down to Southampton.*"

For a long time he lay there in his chair half stunned by this news, then gradually recovered. Martha was gone. He passed his hand over his forehead; and then, quick as lightning, a resolution flashed into his mind. "She has abandoned me. But I shall try and save her yet."

When Mr. Tillotson found himself on the platform of the railway, it seemed all deserted and dismal. The lights were half down; the huge arching—which hung in the air, and appeared to gather clouds in its recesses—seemed like the vaulting of a huge cave, and to hold awful mysteries in its iron waves. Only a large clock, with a great ghastly dial, on which played a concealed lamp, and which looked as if held out by a stiff straight arm from the wall, told the hour with an unwearied brilliance, showing Mr. Tillotson that it was now gone one. The place was deserted. The lines of rails went off, away into darkness. The lines of carriages—funereal, and not glistening now—went off away into darkness too, and seemed like endless strings of mourning coaches laid up in ordinary. And all up through this vast archway—which seemed now like a huge tube—swept the cutting night winds at intervals; and, passing through Mr. Tillotson's frame, made him shrink and cower.

Yet he was not conscious of it. This was but a physical instinct. A strong porter came by, and he asked him about the next train for the seaport. It was, indeed, the same station to which he had come on the day of his gloomy departure from St. Alans. And this thought came back on him at the moment. He thought of his state of mind *then* almost with a smile—a smile of despair. Foolish, frantic, twisted yarn of follies that go to make up what is called man! And this porter was actually the "intelligent" man, who on the same day had done the honours of the place to our Captain.

The porter entered into the spirit of what was asked of him. The mail of course—the express—even the night-luggage—every train was gone; there would not be another until six to-morrow. By-and-

by there would be a "packet train" in, and that was what *they* were waiting for. And then they could get home to their beds.

Mr. Tillotson was almost stunned by this news. And with the news up came a shower of sharp stinging Minie bullets from the dark end of the cave, and swept through him once more. The porter drew his jacket about him. "That goes through a feller like a knife," he said. "Stand in here, Sir, out of the blast." And he opened a waiting-room and raised the gas. (A huge gloomy apartment, with clouds settling over the other end, where there were the sepulchral refreshment counters.)

"What am I to do?" said Mr. Tillotson, calmly. "I *must* get down to-night. Is there no way? A special train?"

The man shook his head. "Too late, Sir. Stokers all gone—superintendent in bed. Why, not three weeks ago, there was a feller come running in at this very hour a-screeching for a special. His wife was a dying. And he put a real hunderpun note down there on that table—I saw it with my own eyes—and we could do nothing for *him*."

"But this is worse than that," said Mr. Tillotson, passionately. "Worse than any one dying. I *must* get down to-night. You do not know what depends on it. Here!"—he was appealing to the true source of sympathy and invention with a liberality that the porter had not experienced in his life—"find out some way—think of something. Help me! Where does this superintendent live? We are losing most precious moments."

The man had his finger to his forehead in a second. (Perhaps the unfortunate whose wife was dying had not appealed in the same way.) "Wait—wait, Sir. You stay there. Ah! there's Walker. Here, Walker."

Walker was the railway policeman passing by carelessly outside. To him the porter—still not forgetting to muffle his jacket up about his chest—went out. They had a long consultation. And in the ghostly refreshment room Mr. Tillotson sat and waited calmly. Walker and the porter both came in together.

"I have it, Sir," said the porter. "There's the packet train will be in here in half an hour, or less, and th' engine must go back to the works, thirty mile off. And I tell you what, Sir, I'll just run up and see the superintendent. He's as likely not to be gone to bed."

"Sure not," said the policeman.

"And he won't mind sending it on to the junction—only twenty mile forward. (It will all go into the night's work.) And then you can pick up the express. The very thing; nothing could be nicer."

The policeman said it fitted to a T, and in a moment the porter had gone.

In a few minutes the packet train was signalled. Porters came dropping out of niches and corners, like rabbits creeping out of

burrows. A bell rang; the dim lights all suddenly flashed up, and in a moment the cave was all ablaze. Down, afar off, ruby-coloured moons were flashing in the air, and changing into moons of the regular tint; and presently there was a rumbling and a hollow roaring, and a white cloud of steam, and the packet train came in.

It was a very dwindled packet train—not more than two or three carriages. For, as the guard told one of the porters as he came on to the platform, "it was a tearing night at sea," and only a few had come over.

In a few moments more the porter had returned with the superintendent, who had *not* gone to bed, and who, in truth, when he had seen Mr. Tillotson's card, which was very well known, had come with alacrity.

"To be sure; nothing could be easier. Here, this carriage might stay on, and go down with the engine."

It was like a good-natured host ordering out a horse and car for his guests. And in a very few moments the sleepless telegraph was working, and the horse, after a short mash of water and coke, was put in front quite fresh and brisk, and was cantering out in the volumes of dark clouds, which had by this time set in again, and made his hoofs echo gaily on the ground. And in a lonely, sad-coloured blue carriage—with a sickly lamp above his head (it had burnt all the way up from the packet over the heads of sick passengers) Mr. Tillotson sat.

What were his meditations during these weary half hours? Rather what were the pictures that seemed to grow out of the dull blue cushions before him? The sense of utter blankness and calm misery, and the crash and tumbling of many castles. In fact, his whole life lay there before him—a sudden heap of ruins. Every motion was leading him towards that scene whence that glimpse of happiness had flashed so long ago; and even on that blue background he made out the spire and towers of the old cathedral, lying in a tranquil serenity; and from its long and graceful windows could hear that sad music floating, touched by fingers that he had once——This made his heart shrink-up and ache; and he put his hands before his eyes to brush away these old cruel dreams.

There was now a light or two swooping by, like stray meteors, and a slackening—one or two more lights, and a halt; while a conversation went on. This was the "works." No doubt an explanation was going on with the engine ostlers, who were perhaps surprised at not having to take away their horse to his stables. And then they went on again; and the dull blue cloth gradually began once more to break out into fresh pictures.

And yet he was wonderfully calm. Of late, the gradual and cruel frustration of all his hopes, the slow sweeping away of the dream of happiness that he had fondly and foolishly thought had come round for him, had prepared him for this blow. Only at times,

as the thought that he might be too late, and that he would never arrive to save her from herself and from the certain misery which this wretched step must bring with it, the flying engine seemed to crawl, and the cold gripe of despair seemed to close upon his heart; and he had to rise and walk about his prison to set himself free. As for himself, he was now so dulled, so hopeless, and almost so resigned, that he had quite accepted his miserable condition, and only thought of the one aim.

Again more lights were flitting by. They were coming to the junction. The junction was very dark, for they only lit up for their regular visitors. And here upon another lonely platform—a station that, as it were, was in its night-cap and very drowsy—Mr. Tillotson stepped out into the chill air; and the tired horse that had brought him at last went off gaily to his stable—his night's work done.

For about a quarter of an hour Mr. Tillotson paced that lonely platform. He thought that miserable express would never come up. Here, too, the sore winds were raging, and stabbing him pitilessly in his chest, in his back, through and through, on all sides, so cruelly, that it occurred to him for the first time, that it was folly not to have brought some "wraps." But the next moment he was smiling at himself for thinking of such things; and, indeed, he was disturbed by a faint shriek in the distance. The express *was* come at last.

Now a porter or two, who had been asleep on a bench by the fire, came angrily out, rubbing their eyes. They resented this disturbance. Up it came—a mass of pale sickly light and blue chambers, with not half a dozen passengers, and a general air of a dream. It seemed to bring drowsiness in with it, as it glided up by the platform. Mr. Tillotson was put into one of the blue chambers, he could have had his choice of half-a-dozen lonely ones,—and they went on again straight into the night.

It was a long, long journey. He never slept, for his eyes were visited with a strange and almost watchful wakefulness. But the night seemed to have no end; and the darkness, and the ceaseless burr, and the sharp rattle of musketry as they swept through an open station, and the stray and flashing lights, no end. When he looked back later to that night, he turned his eyes away; for it seemed to him the longest and weariest he had ever known in his long and weary life, and he had lain awake many, many nights. But here at last was a cold and ragged blue streak—a jagged rent far away; and already the sickly lamp was burning pale.

It ended at last. Here in the steady cold of morning, the train at last came rolling into the station far down to the south-west, where the seaport was; when another great pale clock-face, held out from the wall, showed that the hour was four. Into that cold morning light came the figure of Mr. Tillotson; but a figure so shrunk and wasted and aged by that night's work, that a bright

porter, fresh from his good night's rest, pointed him out to a friend of the same cloth. But they did not notice how brightly his eyes were burning, for he felt now that he had got so far over the difficulties of his pursuit, and might yet be in time "to save her." That was the cry always sounding in his ears, with the hoarse monotonous jangling of a fog-bell. "Save her!" The porter who had noticed him was eagerly offering his services, though a little damped by hearing that there was "no luggage."

Now the sun had begun to shine, and Mr. Tillotson stood there at the door of the station, unconsciously shivering, and mechanically thinking where he should go to, or what he should do. Alas! the great seaport was a huge place, with docks which seemed overgrown with forests of shipping. Where should he begin? The prospect was one of despair. The porter came to him again. Was he expectin' any one. Did he wish for a cab? Could he do any thing? Mr. Tillotson saw that he was intelligent; and recollecting what good service the other porter had done for him, told him his difficulties. The porter *was* very intelligent, and grasped the whole in a moment.

"Exactly, Sir," said he. "Know the very party. Lady came in last night by the half-past eleven train. Yeller hair, and a gent with her. Couldn't see *his* face; he kept back so."

"The very thing," said Mr. Tillotson eagerly; and yet he was feeling the gripe closing upon his heart again. "The very pair. Find them for me—make them out—lose not a moment, for they may be gone even now—and you shall be taken care of. Where did they go to?"

"Ah, bless you, Sir," said the other, "there's the point. Where did the cab go to? You see, in this place, we don't take down the numbers as they do up yonder. We'd never find that cab. Maybe he's down now at the docks, or up at the factories. I tell you what though, Sir. If I might make so bold, you should go straight to a hotel—the Royal Albion—and lie down and take your sleep, for you don't look well, and leave the rest to me. I'll go round *all* the 'o-tels, and find 'em out——"

"But they will be gone," said he distractedly; "there is a vessel to sail; what time does it go? they will be gone if we are not quick."

"Lord bless you," said the other, "there are wessels going from this place every harf-hour."

"But this was to Australia," said Mr. Tillotson.

"Ah, that's better," said the other. "But, bless you, they're going too. You can't count 'em. Now take my advice, Sir, and make for the Albion, and I'll hunt them up, if they're in the town."

It did indeed seem the best advice. His head was swimming round, and he had a deep, thick oppression on his chest, which

almost prevented his speaking. The "gashes" left by the cruel winds that had been stabbing him all the way so mercilessly were still raw. Yet, thank Heaven, here was the smiling day at last, and that long night, with the sickly lamp and the blue cushions, which seemed like a week of long, long nights, was now far behind.

He took the advice offered to him, and went straight to the Royal Albion. They almost hesitated about taking in the wan, worn gentleman, who seemed to have almost death in his face, and who came without luggage—which was a more serious consideration. But the landlady, who came out after the landlord, was a humane and gentle woman. Her husband saw the well-filled purse with which Mr. Tillotson's trembling fingers were busy, and so he was taken in, and he all but tottered to a great white room, that seemed all plaster of Paris (it was a new hotel, finished but six months), and at last lay down upon a great bed, where as he lay, with eyes that felt starting and staring up to meet the white ceiling overhead, countless cog-wheels went whirring and buzzing round in his brain, and the drone of the night journey was at his ear.

"Better try and get a good sleep, Sir," said the humane landlady, as she shut the door, "and you'll be all right in an hour or so."

Try to sleep! Kind advice; but his eyes seemed as tight and hard as steel. The good landlady was below, taking thought with herself how she should send up at the proper time a "nice" hot breakfast, which the "poor, gentle gentleman," who had something on his mind, would enjoy with relish, after he had had his sleep—say about twelve or one o'clock. But the "poor gentleman" was still on his back, with steel bands tightening across his chest, with strong wakeful eyes, and he would leap up and rush to the window at the sound of every cab or carriage. Thus the minutes and the half-hours were slipping away. At last he could endure it no longer, and hardly able to lift his head, he went down. The humane lady met him, and protested against his going out, not at least until he had had something warm; but he would not wait, but went forth.

It was a bright, sunny, almost gay day, and every thing looked very cheerful. The streets were crowded; many passed by him as he stood on the steps, all busy—some serious, many laughing: a husband and wife—young, whispering and enjoying some secret joke; a father and daughter; a business man smiling to himself.

He wandered on listlessly. He got out of the busier streets, and to his surprise saw the sun glistening on the water. He was close to the docks; and here were the solid masses of granite and heavy gates, and heavier waggons rolling slowly through the heavy gates behind a string of monster horses, and past men with golden legends on shining glazed hats. And over the great walls that joined the heavy gates he could see the great thick plantations of masts,

crowded like a jungle. The sun was strong, and beat down on his forehead, and at moments he felt as if he could have sunk down there on the pavement; but a curious instinct carried him on. And fortunately it was so, for as he waited at a crossing, with his head swimming round, and almost inclined to catch at the lamp-post, a cab came round the corner and swept past him, in the window of which was the devotional face that he knew—ah, too well!—in and out of his dreams, and the sun glinted with a flash on the masses of saffron hair, that for him had so long proved a sanctified colour.

This vision gave him back strength. He was not too late. She might be saved yet—for herself, but not for him—and in a moment, with the strength of a strong man, he had called another cab, had got in, and was following her close behind.

She had not seen him—perhaps if she had, would scarcely have recognised him. They went on, gradually leaving the open crowded streets of the seaport town, until they came to the narrower and dark quarters—the one cab following at a distance—until at last they came close to another dock, and the first cab drew up at a sort of second-class plaster-fronted hotel, and which was called the Angel.

Mr. Tillotson stopped at a distance: saw a golden flash as she got down and went in. Then after a pause got out himself and went in too.

He said he wished to see the lady who had just gone in. There were no questions asked by them. They only said she was just going away, and that they were "making out hers and the gentleman's bill." He went up with his hand on his heart, opened the door softly, and there saw her, with her bonnet still on, her face bent forward on the table and covered up in her hands. She was weeping, and did not hear or see.

This sight brought fury and strength back to his weary frame. He walked up straight to her and laid his hand on her wrist. She looked up, gave a cry, and started, shrank back from him to the sofa. He stood looking at her a moment, then spoke:

"I have found you—you may thank Heaven—and have saved you from disgrace in spite of yourself. Come out of this place; we must not stay here longer,—not a moment—not a second. Come quick, so long as I have strength to move."

Part of her start had indeed been at his changed and shrunken face. Ten years seemed to have come upon him since the day before. It was more the face of a dying man. She had scarcely heard what he had said, or gathered its import, she was so shocked and scared. She ran to him now.

"Oh," she said, "what does this mean? you are ill. What has done all this? Tell me!"

"What has done this?" he said, motioning her back. "Don't

you know? It is you! You, you cruel, heartless, wicked woman! —you cold creature!—whom I now see in her true colours. God forgive you—forgive you your crime! Thank *Him* that you have escaped public disgrace for your guilt!"

She understood it all at once, and drew herself up.

"Disgrace! crime! Do you seriously say this?"

"Injured? of course!" he said, smiling bitterly. "The day is over for that to have effect; but it has all broken down at last. The farce has ended. Come; come away with me now so far as London. After to-morrow you are free. But comfort yourself with this—that you are *saved* now; and that for the time the disgrace you would have brought on yourself and on me is averted. Come!"

The scorn—the sense of injustice—the sheer amazement—that was filling her—overpowered every other thought.

"And *you* speak in this way; you can *slander* me in this way. Then I shall not say one word. I owe it to my own dignity."

"Dignity!" said he with a dismal sneer.

"Neither," she went on, "shall I return with you, as you propose. Let it end, as you say; but let it end here."

"End here!" he repeated. "No; you must come. It is my duty at least to save you."

"Save me!" she repeated excitedly, "there is the slander again! But it must end. The sufferings I have borne for three months I would not bear for another day. I know the vile thoughts that have been in your mind all this time; the cruel, unfair, and unwarrantable suspicions that you have been feeding on,—unworthy of yourself; unworthy of me. I could not endure it for another hour. I understand the whole. I disdain to clear myself; I scorn justification. What reparation can you ever make for all your several suspicions and unworthy plottings and watchings? It must end, and end here."

She paused a moment, then went on with fresh excitement:

"Not one word shall pass my lips as to last night's business; not a single word. I disdain to make an excuse. If you will, you may find out the truth from those who know it, and will tell you; but it will be too late then. Guilt! disgrace! Oh, shame on you! If you only knew the truth, and what a sacrifice I made!"

"Oh, I know," he said, not indeed trying to smile, as might be supposed from the form of words, but with a sad despair. "I know about that! I found *that* out early."

"You do not understand yet, and *cannot* understand! Guilt! disgrace! I will say this much here—and Heaven is looking down on me now, and I call on it to listen and judge me—up to the day I married you I *did* love him with my whole heart and soul; and up to the day I married you, beyond friendship and gratitude, I had no feeling of what is called love for you!"

"I know, I know!" said he bitterly.

"A grand admission, you will say," she went on. "But wait. From that hour, I declare to Heaven, as I stand here, I set myself to tear that old affection from my heart. As I live, there was not a moment, not a minute, that I was not busy with that struggle! Watching myself; every day making progress, every day doing violence to myself,—until at last I had succeeded. Was this the disgrace and guilt you charge me with? I am innocent—innocent! In dream, thought, word, or deed I am, before God!" And she raised her arm to heaven, and the devout eyes looked up.

Mr. Tillotson gazed at her a little wildly.

"Well, I did not know; I did not see it. And last night. Ah, last night!"

"Ah, last night!" she repeated; "you will know of *that*, never fear. But too late. I disdain to say a word. There, it is all ended now. Disgrace and guilt. I know on whose head rests the disgrace and guilt of this night. I have borne it too long. My life has been made wretched by your ungenerous, unmanly, *unfounded* suspicion; a morbid, diseased suspicion that would stop even charity itself—that would keep me from obeying the despairing call of one who was, as he believed, in the last extremity; and whom I *did* love with all his faults, and who *has* loved me to the end!"

Mr. Tillotson gave a groan, and started forward eagerly.

"What!" he cried; "you did not go down *with* him? He *sent* for you! Oh, what have I said!—what have I done? What does this mean?"

She did not answer; but went on. "A poor unhappy wanderer, that has been unfortunate all his life. I should have blushed had I refused him."

He put his hands up to his forehead, and said in a low voice, as if to himself, "Oh, fool—fool!"

She did not hear, but went towards the door.

"You shall learn the whole," she said, in a softened tone; "later, —after we have both gone on our separate paths. I dare not look forward to more of that life; your unkind suspicions would never be at rest. It would make both our lives wretched; but it is better that we should part. I shall now go back to London."

Mr. Tillotson said not a word. He did not raise his head. He seemed to have been struck down, and made no protest. A strange change indeed had come over *her*. She passed him by slowly, looked back at him, then, as if touched by compassion for his worn and suffering face, and his hopeless prostration, turned back and said to him with the old sweetness, "Why, why did you do this? He is gone now, I shall never see him again, and——"

He gave a start, ran forward, would have stopped, but she had gone—had floated away. With a half cry, and the exclamation he had made before, "Fool, fool!" he sank back into the chair.

"Gone away!" he repeated, "Gone away!"

Suddenly he heard outside the door an unequal footstep that he knew. It came nearer and nearer, and when Mr. Tillotson turned round he saw a very familiar figure standing in the doorway, and heard the familiar voice.

"My God Almighty! Tillotson here!"

CHAPTER XXII.

ROSS.

How shall be described the soothing comfort which the presence of that friend brought with it! How, while almost confounded with surprise and astonishment at the presence of Mr. Tillotson down there, he affected with infinite dexterity to accept it as in the natural order, rambling on with pleasant conventionalities, until he suddenly stopped himself with much alarm: "My God Almighty, Tillotson, you are ill. What's the matter, my dear friend? Why, you're as white as that tablecloth there. Let me ring. Just wait a moment, now."

But the other detained him gently: "I am not well,—that is, not quite well. But tell me about this wretched business,—I have strength enough to hear *that*,—tell me, has *he* gone?"

"Egad, he has," answered the Captain. "He was got away at last,—shipped him this morning at ten o'clock. Went off like a trump. He had the good drop in him after all, and behaved like a gentleman."

"Yes," said Mr. Tillotson with surprising calmness, and pressing his forehead as if in pain; "yes, I see that *now*—I *begin* to see. And about last night—tell me quickly. She went down—not by herself?" he added wistfully.

"My God Almighty, no!" said the Captain gaily; "not at all. Have you got her note, eh?"

"Got her note!" said Mr. Tillotson despairingly; "no, no, no. She wrote to tell me she was going down? Is *that* it? Yes, of course it is."

"My goodness!" said the Captain, wondering. "Why it must have gone astray. Egad! I never was so astonished in my life. Only old Tom the Bolshero is getting so many visits from young and lovely ladies that I think his head will be turned. I had just got on the dressin'-gown, and was taking the marker out of Thaddeus o' Warsaw, and sitting down for a good two or three pages' read, before putting on the nightcap, when I declare if there she wasn't

standing before me, with her bonnet on. Says she to me, without a word more, 'Captain Diamond, dear uncle, will you come down with me to-night? Poor Ross is ill or dying, and there isn't a second to be lost; and he has written for me, beggin', beggin'——' ''Gad, then, I will,' said I; 'give me the hand. As far as you like, my dear; and proud I am to see a lady of your spirit.' And in a moment I had the dressin'-gown off in a chair beside me, and had slipped into my coat. And while I was doing this, egad! she had written a note up to our friend Tilney, the old boy, telling him to take a cab and post off *straight* to you; to make all safe, you know. She's a treasure of sense, so she is. My God Almighty, Tillotson, what is it?"

Another cry had broken from him. All this time the steel bands had been drawing tighter over his chest; all this time the moral tension and the excitement from that terrible night, which had kept him up so far, had been gradually giving way; and now came the discovery of *a fatal and irrevocable mistake* to overwhelm him. Those strained eyes had closed, and he sank before the alarmed Captain in a sort of faint. It had indeed come about as described by the Captain. He had taken up Thaddeus of Warsaw to read a page or two, which with him was such a laborious office—he repeating each word carefully and slowly with his lips, and the print being small—that it took him many months, and often more than a year, to dispose of one novel satisfactorily. And though by this process he lost the whole continuity of the story, being entirely absorbed in making out the sense of each sentence, still he enjoyed the whole very much, and would not have missed his nightly "page or two" for any thing.

He was just preparing to begin when she entered hastily, as described. Nothing could be more gallant or generous than the behaviour of the Captain. He rather enjoyed it; understood it at once; and having "put together" a few trifles in a "handbag," was "ready to start" literally in five minutes.

Through the journey, too, nothing could be more delicate than his tone and behaviour. He was always reassuring her, as it were—for he saw that she was uneasy—saying, "Now I declare I'm thinking what a time it would be before old Tom would have thought of this. After all, my dear, it's the women that have the heads of sense." Once, in spite of all his caution, something slipped out that made Mrs. Tillotson colour, and speak a little vehemently: "Poor Tillotson we supposed *couldn't* manage it. Ill, eh, my dear? Or the business was it?" He could have cut his tongue out for this speech, he said afterwards.

"It is idle concealing it from you, dear Captain Diamond," said she, excitedly. "*You* can guess why I should not have consulted *him* in this matter. Latterly these strange unfounded suspicion

"Ah, to be sure," said the Captain in great confusion; "quite right; always sensible. The proper thing to do. Of course Tillotson will say it's quite right."

"I only wish to do my duty," she said calmly. "In this matter I am almost indifferent. If I had gone home, and we had hardly a minute to spare,—you know whether I should have been able to come at all. Now that this is to be the last of all this, we may hope that we may begin a new life."

"To be sure, my dear; to be sure," said the Captain reflectively.

In truth he was thinking to himself at that moment, and thinking uneasily, of that "old Bolshero" Tilney. Would he do what he was told? He had a low opinion of that gentleman's ability for practical life, though he liked his company. Old Tilney, he had a suspicion, would go on with his "blatherum," and sit "foostering" there over his wine without stirring. This reflection made him very uneasy; an uneasiness, however, which he was careful to disguise.

All through that journey he was more uneasy and restless almost in his delicate attentions; now limping away at the first station, to "get something hot and hot, to keep the cold out of the old leg," but returning in a short time literally encumbered with wine and tea, so that there might be a choice open to his companion.

By an hour before midnight they had arrived. In a very short time the Captain had found out the best hotel, and had driven there; had then, at her request, driven off to an obscure inn, down near the docks, where he, whom they had come to see, was lying. Her heart was in a flutter, but she was quite calm outside. And when the Captain was going in *by himself*, "to make sure, you know, that we have got hold of the right shop, my dear," but in truth fearing some bad news, she took his arm and entered the house with him.

The landlord met them, and knew by instinct they were the persons he expected: "I am very glad you have come," he said; "we don't know what to do. Would you like to go up to him at once?"

"See here, my friend," said the Captain, pinching his arm privately; "are you sure now we'd better go up first, eh?"

"I don't know what to say, Sir," said the innkeeper, "whether he is ill or no. They attacked him in the street and beat him. But he has been up all the day and night, and *says* he is well."

They all went up together: in a small room on the first floor they found him lying on a sofa, with the old wild eyes and inflamed cheeks—now wilder and more inflamed. He gave a cry as *she* entered, and half started up.

"Ah! Come at last!" he said. "I knew you would."

He looked as if he was in a fever, and yet he said over and over again that he was well,—perfectly well *now*. When he had sent up he thought he was "done." "A set of blackguards," he said, "insulted me, and when I tried to give them a lesson—and I *marked* some of them finely, I can tell you—they got round me with sticks

too, and I had nothing, nothing in the world! What could I do against a half-dozen. They *did* give me a beating though—battered my head in, I believe; and only for our friend there," pointing to the landlord, "it would have been all up with me on the spot."

The landlord later explained to the Captain that it was as cruel and cowardly an attack as he ever saw; and that but for him the unfortunate young man had been lying dead there on the paving stones. He supposed he was now all right—at least he *said* so.

Ross caught her hand, and held it, and looked at her again and again. "So you have come!" he said; "come at last! I knew you would; I was sure you would. I knew you wouldn't leave a poor cast off fellow, that's driven out of the country, without a hope or a chance! Yes, *he*'s done it. He's beaten me at last. The odds were too great. My dear Captain—no money—no means—no strength even."

"Nonsense, my boy," said the Captain; "you'll get all that where you're going, and come home in a few years full of money and strength—both. That you will, I'll take my oath."

Ada had been looking at him with gentle pity and sadness. Then she said with some reproach—

"Why did you do this?—send for me in this way? I thought you were ill and dying."

"And so I was," he said with a strange solemnity. "Before Heaven I was. As I sit here I was. Ask the landlord there wasn't I insensible for hours; and at this moment," he added, putting his hand to his head, "I don't know what is the matter *here*. There is a ball of lead there—no matter; they haven't killed me yet."

"But have you seen a doctor?" said she anxiously; "surely you ought."

"To get me ready to go on board to-morrow. Don't be afraid, you'll be rid of me. If I should be half dying at twelve to-morrow I'll go. Now is your mind at rest?"

"No, no," said the Captain, "that wouldn't do. See here now, be sensible, and don't let us do things in a hurry. I'll go now and knock up a doctor, and bring him here in no time."

"Stay where you are, Captain," said the other. Then to her: "And so you came down to me—left *him* and all. I suppose he was storming. Oh, it was very good of you; very like your own old sweet self. If you hadn't I'd have gone up to *you*. Doctors, indeed! The sight of you has done me good. Good God, what shall I do without you?"

"You are beginning a new life now, dear Ross," she said gravely, "and are to leave all follies behind. The greatest pride and the greatest good news you can send us is, that you are steady and doing well. If you want to make me happy——"

"How easy you can talk," he said, starting up. "Listen to her; just listen to her! Steady, indeed! *Who* made me unsteady?

What made me unsteady? What has ruined and undone me, and turned me into a wretched outcast? You, Ada! It is your doing. You sold yourself for money and gratitude, and persecuted suffering innocence, and for——"

"Hush," she answered, in equal excitement; "I did not. It is too late to speak of that."

"Yes, for money," he went on, "and suffering innocence; and it has served you right, I will say. It looks like the judgment good people are always talking of. For where is the money *now?* and as for the *innocence*, you know——"

She caught his arm, and with an imploring look, said: "Not here! I know and confess; but not here."

He looked at her for a moment with some triumph—then said: "Poor, poor Ada! I am sorry too. *We* might have been very happy. No matter; as you say, all that is gone and past. The only thing left is to ship me; and you may depend on me for that.—Ah, Captain, I have been treated cruelly among them all. They have beaten me. She was mine—always meant to be for me. She was, and she knows it; but I do not blame her. My poor Ada! Even as it is, it is better for her. My poor, sweet girl, I shall never, never see you again. The life, someway, seems to be worn out of me. But I have not been so bad altogether. I have been worried, and hunted, and persecuted; and I dare say if I had got fair play, like other fellows, Captain, I might have turned out decently. I give you my honour, as a living man, I always laid out, when I had got *her*, to begin and be good. I did indeed. *She* would have been the saving of me, and I shouldn't have been the wretched—convict (for they are shipping me like a convict) that I am now. I speak the truth solemnly—I would; only she left me. But what is the use of thinking of such things now?"

"No, indeed, my dear child," said the Captain, much affected. (Indeed, he often after thought of the scene, and said his heart bled for the poor pair.) "What's the use of talking of these things now! Our friend here will go out and coin money, and we'll have him home on a pension—in, let me see, five or six years; and all this will have gone over, and he'll be dining with us, and telling us of shooting the blacks, and all sorts of adventures."

"Yes, it comes to that," said Ross, wearily; "it all comes back to that. To-morrow at twelve they'll put me on board. Never fear, my dear sweet Ada. It was very good of you to come down. But after all, there's no harm in a little dreaming like this."

It was long past midnight when they left him, promising to see him again in the morning down at the ship—the Promised Land—which was to sail at twelve.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME AGAIN.

By the time that the Promised Land had been long clear of the docks, and had cast off her steam-tug, and was well out at sea, with darkness coming on, Mr. Tillotson had been brought to the Royal Albion where the good-natured landlady had been looking out wistfully, and wondering what had kept him. It was the best room in her house, and she was hovering outside the door, good and unsuspicious soul as she was, to hear what a great local doctor, who had been hurriedly sent for, would decide. It was a pity, she thought, that he had no woman's gentle hand to look after him and smooth his pillow, and only that good-natured lame old gentleman.

It had been better, certainly; for the Captain, best and most willing of men, could not supply a wife's place; and that wife, Mrs. Tillotson, hurt by ungenerous suspicions, and not knowing that her husband was suffering from anything but a morbid, unjust, and unreasonable fit of suspicion, had gone back straight to London; while that husband crushed, overwhelmed, had given away to what the excitement of that long, long night had helped him to fight off. The dreadful wounds of all that night had begun to fester; the cruel stabbings he had borne so many hours—all made themselves felt *now*. He was at last prostrated; and the grand local doctor, Gabbett Watson, physician to the Royal Dock Hospital—one of the governors ditto (Gabbett Watson afterwards moved to London on the invitation and promise of support of Lord Cantover, and was ruined by the step)—whispered to the Captain, "On the lungs, Sir Serious."

It was indeed serious. And yet hopeless, miserable and *abandoned* as he was, he would not yet quite "give in." His one wish and prayer was to be "taken home." He had strength for that, he said. The Captain had many councils with the good landlady on this point, who repeatedly asked him where was his mother or wife that she didn't come and nurse him, and London so near?" questions that put the good-natured invention of the Captain to all sorts of straits.

"You see," he said, "she's very delicate herself; and, egad! she likes him only too well, Ma'am; and, faith, we're trying to keep it from her you see, Ma'am!"

But privately the Captain thought she had not "behaved well al together;" though indeed the whole business "was getting so cloudy, that it was too much for old Tom to follow." He must, however, "give it against her."

Towards evening, and towards the evening of a lovely sunny day, when not a breath was stirring, and the stabbing east winds had hurried off to visit other regions, Mr. Tillotson, looking, as the Captain said, "like a ghost," worn and aged with suffering of mind and body, came down to the sitting-room to the astonished Captain.

"My God Almighty!" said the latter. "Do you want to get your death, Tillotson? This is going beyond the beyonds. Go up again, my dear fellow. Go, now."

But Mr. Tillotson said in a sort of whisper, "It is no use. I cannot rest here. I must go home. Let me go, either to live or die. I cannot get well here. She has abandoned me. But still I am innocent; and before she goes I want to tell her so, and humble myself. I have done her cruel wrong. But I cannot rest or get well here. I must go. I have made up my mind. If I wait another hour, I shall not have strength. I pant to get to my own home again; and I feel this—this thing is growing fast upon me."

And he put his hand upon his chest, where were the steel bars, now tightening every moment.

The Captain said many a "What folly now, my dear fellow!" and implored him to "get back to his warm bed" again. But without effect. At last it occurred to him it might be wiser after all to let him have his way. An opinion he was fortified in, when he noticed some faint light coming into Mr. Tillotson's dull eyes, and the very faintest tinge of colour into his cheeks.

The good-natured landlady was in loud protest, wholly apart, it must be said, from any interest in her house. She even grew warm to the Captain, on whose innocent head she laid the responsibility of the change.

"Ah, you should know better," she said to him, and have learned sense enough at your age not to take a sick man out of his bed. Why, he's death in his face at this moment. And you'll see what'll come of this, mark my words!" Rebukes which the Captain took with perfect sweetness and good-humour, disarming that lady by owning that "most people with him *had* their own way," and that "he had done his best—indeed he had."

The train started at three; and the crowd going to town by that evening train were struck by the shrunken and sickly figure that came on the platform. Yet there was still brightness in his eyes. The prospect of *action* had given him strength. It was a wonderful victory of spirit over the flesh. In the train, and hardly able to hold up his head, he said to the Captain faintly, "If I can manage only four hours! After that, I don't care." With his usual forethought, the Captain had secured a compartment for themselves, and had even taken the precaution of getting a doctor (not, of course, of the great local standing of Gabbett Watson) to accompany them in the train privately, for a few miles.

But as the train swept on—it was a very speedy express—the

Captain's watchful eye saw that his companion was growing worse; and at the very first station, when they had been about three-quarters of an hour on the road, and when the doctor came to the carriage, like a common passenger, the Captain bade him get in. The doctor was a little alarmed at the change. The light was fading out of Mr. Tillotson's eyes; the excitement was fast waning; the energy that had borne him through so much was weary. The iron bands were tightening: he could not speak,—indeed seemed scarcely conscious.

"My God Almighty," said the Captain, worrying, "what are we to do? There's the train gone on."

The local doctor put a little bottle to Mr. Tillotson's lips. "We must do all we can to keep him up, just for three-quarters more. He shouldn't have been moved at all. It may be fatal."

"My God! I knew that—I saw that!" the Captain said, in an agony.

"Just for three-quarters more," went on the doctor, again putting the phial to Mr. Tillotson; "this will keep him up. We will then be at a large town, where we can stop and have good accommodation. If he goes a mile further after that, I wouldn't answer for it."

Utterly overwhelmed, the Captain could only murmur, "And this place—where is it?"

"A large cathedral town,—St. Alans. There's a good inn there—the White Hart—where they will take care of him. Ah! see, he's better now."

Were not these names two secret talismans, to call back the waning strength of Mr. Tillotson? "St. Alans," he said, eagerly; "where?—who is going to St. Alans?"

"That's right, Sir," said the doctor, gladly. "We shall be there in half an hour. We are going to stop there for the night at the White Hart, if you have no objection."

"Going to St. Alans?" said Mr. Tillotson, lighting up, "and near St. Alans? Yes, let us stop there. I should like it, indeed. The very place! Take me there!"

"Egad, we will, Tillotson," said the Captain, "and to the very house he says. I have heard of it before now. An uncommon good one."

"Going back to St. Alans," repeated Mr. Tillotson, wearily looking from one window, as if to make it out. "It seems as if ordered so. It is the spot I would have chosen after all. This is good news, indeed. Much better than going on to town, I am sure, my dear Captain," he added, with a curious smile. "I shall find rest *there*, for I feel very, very tired."

The Captain put on his heartiest gaiety.

"What must it be to Tom the Bolshero! I assure you, my dear fellow, his old bones are aching at this moment, and as for the leg,"

added the Captain, with perfect truth, "it's as tender as if you had been rasping it with a file all night." But the doctor was keeping his eye very gravely on Mr. Tillotson.

But here they were now slackening speed. As they did so Mr. Tillotson seemed to rouse himself, and with his heavy clouded eyes dragged himself to the window.

"There it is!" he said, eagerly. "I see it! The spire, and the Close." And then he repeated, softly, "Dear St. Alans."

He was put into a cab, and they drove away up the town. Those clouded eyes looked out still, and recognised the old streets: the gorgeous grocers in full business, and the gentle decay as they passed by the older region of the Close. These objects seemed to supply him with strength, until here came the Old White Hart, with Hiscoke, the landlord, at the door, who remembered perfectly, and welcomed his guest.

"I am come back to you," said Mr. Tillotson, as he came in on the Captain's arm, "and give me my old room if you can."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RETURN TO ST. ALANS.

THE old room was disengaged, as were indeed many old rooms in the White Hart. For the New Railway Hotel, down at the station—but that was a long story of iniquity, as the landlord himself admitted to the doctor. There Mr. Tillotson laid himself down, at last to find rest. Then came the reaction. "My dear Captain," he said, "I shall never get out of this place; and now that I am here I am so happy."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow," said the Captain. "Don't talk stuff."

"No matter, then," said the other, gently. "I am very glad, though, to find myself here again. This is the only spot I ever was happy in in all my long weary life. Oh, I was so happy here! and, my dear friend, I might have been happy now at this moment; but for my own folly and stupidity I might have been the most blessed of all men at this moment," he added, raising himself; "but I have lost her—lost *all* by my own miserable fault. Sweet angel as she always was, she was right to leave me—quite right. She could have done nothing else. Still I am very happy to be here. The whole scene makes me think of *her*. And I think I

shall soon, my dear kind friend, be nearly tired out; and then I suppose will find some rest."

This appeal the Captain pooh-poohed with a simulated roughness. But he was in his heart deeply touched; and stealing from the room, went to consult Mr. Hiscoke, the landlord. That host directed him to an office which was but round the corner: and there the Captain, going into a little compartment which shut him out (he said later it was for all the world as if he was "going to pledge his old watch") wrote a telegram. It ran thus:

"My dear Child,—Come down here, for God Almighty's sake. Our friend Tillotson is not well indeed, and wants to see you to make all square. Come, do; if only for old Tom's sake."

This message the clerk, who was much pleased with the Captain and his pleasant manner, promised should go at once, and in preference to all other messages. It was delivered to Mrs. Tillotson within half an hour, at a station some twenty miles away. In half an hour more the Captain was limping in to his friend with glasses on his nose, and a bit of tissue paper in his hand, and very joyfully read it out to him.

"Listen to this, my dear boy. See here: 'Dearest husband!' you know who that is. Let me see again—yes. 'Dearest husband, I am flying to you. I shall be with you in two or three hours.—Your fond wife, Ada.' You know who that is! She's a fine, noble girl; I always said so. My God! how women—the creatures—make us blush! They do!"

Mr. Tillotson caught the tissue paper from him, and let his dim eyes fall on the characters. But they were not hers, though the words were. He felt very happy, though the bands were tightening fast.

The Captain had gone down to the coffee-room for a moment, when a florid, bald, good-humoured gentleman, much blown and heated, came up to him.

"Sorry to hear this, Sir," he said, "about Mr. Tillotson. I knew him, but Mrs. Tillotson much better. If ever there was an angel on this earth, and certainly in this ungodly town, she was one. In our family we worship her for a saint. My name is Norbury, Sir." The Captain bowed. "And I'll tell you what I've come up here for, Sir. You knew Tilney, who used to live——"

"Well, well," said the Captain; "often drops in to have his little drop o' sherry with me."

"Yes," said Norbury, "that *is* Tilney; well Sir, they had a sweet little house, just off the Close, in front of the cathedral, Sir, when she, Miss Millwood, was with them. At that time *we* were all stuck in a little hutch of a hole, Sir—I, and the children, and the wife, Sir. For there was a fellow called Topham that used to persecute the canons like the early Christians. We have got rid of him; and thank Heaven we have all mended since, and looked up

a good bit. And 'tis only last week I was able to take at a good rent, the little place the Tilneys had. It's looking lovely now; running wild, Sir, with flowers, and woodbine, and delicious scents. It would do your heart good to see it."

"I am quite sure of that," said the Captain, a little mystified, and not knowing what all this was coming to. "Egad, I am sure it looks beautiful."

"Well, I tell you what, Sir. We were going in next week—the wife and the children; and the children are literally tearing wild to get there,—there's no holding them, Sir. But I've come up now to say, that I know Mrs. Tillotson loves the place, and Mr. Tillotson above all; and they are heartily welcome to it, for it is ready at this moment for him to step into, and we could bring him down there at once. You see, Captain Diamond, a hotel like this, though Hiscoke is well enough, is *hardly* the place."

The Captain took his hand and wrung it heartily. "You're a Christian, Mr. Norbury—begad you are. The very thing! Do you know it's been weighing on me all this time what we were to do with our poor friend up stairs. As you say, a hotel don't do. Why, it's the very thing. A nice spot, with a garden, and the honeysuckle, and the birds singing in the morning, and the old cathedral opposite, which I know he likes. Egad, Sir, I take your offer, Sir; and what d'ye say?—shall we move him at once?"

The Captain limped up straight, and entered softly. Mr. Tillotson was lying on a sofa. "Too soon," he said faintly, "as yet, to expect her."

"No, not that, my dear friend, exactly," said the Captain. "But what would you say to a little place, with a garden, and the honeysuckles and small panes of glass, and a little gate in front, and a view of the church always in front? There's a gentleman here come to let us have the loan of it until you get well, and——"

"Why," said Mr. Tillotson, lifting himself eagerly, "that must be *their* place—the Tilneys'. Ah! Impossible!"

"The very same," said the Captain; "ready there to step into. Nothing could be handsomer of Mr. North, or Norbury—egad, I am no hand at names. And he says it's looking lovely at this moment; all over roses, and fruits, and flowers, and honeysuckle, so that you can't see a patch of the house itself. Why, I'd buy it if I had money, to-morrow, my dear boy——"

In less than an hour more sick Mr. Tillotson was lying in the parlour of the little rustic house of which the Captain had given so luxuriant a description—a description quite warranted by the truth. It was literally overgrown with flowers; and opposite was the great cathedral, rising with a soft magnificence that, even in all his pains, quite soothed him. It was drawing on towards night. Presently the Captain, who was limping about, suddenly started

mysteriously as he passed by the little diamond-paned window, and went softly to the door. There was a softer sound upon the gravel of the little walk; yet not so soft as but the dull ear of the sick man had caught it. He half lifted himself on his sofa. "I hear her," he said; "she has come! I knew—I was sure—she would not desert me. Ah, angel, sweetest comforter!" And as he spoke, he lifted his arms; for the door had opened, and she, the true angel and comforter, and who had soothed and brought life and comfort to so many, now came floating in—was by his side in a moment, and bending over him. Then with the little diamond-paned window open, through which floated in the overpowering scent of flowers, through which could be seen the subdued blue of fading evening and the yellow pile with its great windows transparent as lanterns, it seemed indeed the old days again, before suspicion and worldliness, and trouble, and harassing disquietude had entered in. It seemed the old sweet days of peace and romance returned; which to Mr. Tillotson, looking back from the whirl of town, seemed almost tranquil dreams.

CHAPTER XXV.

MR. TILLOTSON FINDS REST.

YET sweet as were these dreams, they were scarcely so sweet and peaceable as those closing hours of Mr. Tillotson's life. It was like the cool calm evening of a long, long sultry day; and he himself in that delicious retreat felt like a weary and footsore wayfarer, who had been worn out with toiling on through the dust, and had now sunk beside a fountain. Yet he was not sorry. His had been indeed a weary life. The doctor had reluctantly pronounced that he could do nothing—that fatal night and the stabbing winds had done their work too securely on that delicate chest. There was really no hope. A sort of heavy congestion was mounting steadily from his chest upwards.

The faithful Captain could not conceal his trouble; and though performing wonders, considering his years, and being a prodigy of usefulness, although he depreciated all his efforts in the most disrespectful tone—"My God Almighty, Tillotson, don't talk in that way; my dear friend, you'll put me to bed yet, and a hundred old Bolsheros like me; and serve us right. We'll have you on your legs again this day three weeks, please God. Wait until you see what Sir Duncan, the Queen's own feller, will say. That's the boy.

Why, I had the same thing—my chest rammed up like an old musket—and faith, I thought I might as well be ordering my coffin, when *he* came, and with a touch made all right. Not a word of lie in it. Wait, I say, for the Queen's Own; that's the boy for Tom."

This was only to comfort Mrs. Tillotson, now in sore trouble; yet doing her duties with a calm impassibility. But when she came near her husband, her face lit up with a light and interest he had never noticed before; and which, though she did not speak, an instinct told him was affection. "I am so, so happy," he said to her again and again, and holding her hand; "I have never been so happy in my life;" and he added, with that low whisper in which he could only speak, "I think this *all cheaply purchased by that night!*"

But, alas! here was the "Queen's Own"—having snatched a few precious hours, valued at so many golden guineas an hour—come down to pass his judgment, and send a chill to the faithful Captain; not indeed that he affected for his friend any extravagant regard, feeling that for "men" in general this thing *was* to come; that "every fellow" had his chance: "to-day, you—to-morrow, me;" with more of the same rough philosophy. But with women—the creatures; it was wholly different—the old gentle chivalry of the Captain stepped in and "made his old heart bleed," as it was doing now for Mrs. Tillotson. "My God Almighty," he said to Sir Duncan, "how can she be told—the gentle noble girl—all she has gone through!—and the pair of them, doctor, between you and me, just beginning to find out that they love each other! My God! try and do something—do!"

This was as though Sir Duncan was unwilling to save the patient when he could do so. "My dear friend," he said gravely, "you have been a soldier, and it's no use talking fine phrases; the man can't last; I couldn't give him,"—added Sir Duncan, dropping his voice and looking at his watch, as if to read the number of days there—"I couldn't give him two days more—if so much."

The Captain was aghast. "And what's to become of her?" Sir Duncan himself, seizing a favourable opportunity, humanely undertook the task of telling Mr. Tillotson this fatal news. This he did in a plain business-like way—not "unfeelingly," as some of his enemies said—for he had made the same announcement to some thousands in his experience. Mr. Tillotson welcomed this news very cheerfully; and told Sir Duncan that he knew of it a week ago; and begged him "not to tell her."

On the night of this official declaration Mrs. Tillotson, unwearied, unfailing, gentle, was sitting by him—her sweet face bending over. It was about ten o'clock, and the diamond-paned windows were half open, and a band of rich and golden orange streaked the sky across, passing behind the cathedral, being seen through the trans-

parent windows, and forming a rich ribbon of gorgeous light at the back of the tall black trees as they now seemed to be. There was an ineffable stillness abroad; the little common between spread out like a tranquil waste, and every now and again was seen the noiseless figure of a canon returning tranquilly to his home. At this moment the sick Mr. Tillotson raised himself, and looking up into her face, told her calmly the news she had heard that day. "I am very sorry to leave you, dear," he said. "Had this come a year ago, I should have been overjoyed, and hailed it with delight. But it is better now than, perhaps, a year hence, when I know I could not have endured the thought of parting with you at all. For someway I feel that *now* indeed we were going to be so happy; and though I have often deceived myself," he added, smiling, "with a hope that I was at last going to be so happy, still I knew that I was not to be deceived this time; the clouds were at last gone, and I should have liked to live on now! But it is not to be."

He went on after a moment's pause: "I only think of *you* and your generous sacrifice to me—your sweet precious life thrown away—victim to my selfishness. But I shall atone for all now: and I am glad, because this releases you. Yes: releases you," he went on, in increasing agitation; "for I was *not* one that should have approached you. I was not worthy to have touched the edge of your sleeve."

"Dearest husband," she interrupted. "No, it was just the opposite. It was all my wretched folly."

"Hush!" he said gently, taking her hand; "you do not understand me. I was not worthy. I was not fit. Oh! I—I—deceived you cruelly. *You know not what you married;* you know not the *miserable thing* that you, so pure, so innocent, married. But if repentance and suffering—sincere repentance and bitter suffering—can atone, why I have tried; what that will not do——"

She interrupted him hastily. "Let us not think of this now," she said; "we have all enough to account for. As for deceiving me, I always knew there was a secret—some old folly——"

"Folly!" said he; "too gentle a term—guilt—*crime!*"

"No matter what the name," she went on hastily; "it was repented of and atoned for. But, dearest husband, you recollect that evening, in this very house, when you rose and left the room so suddenly. I knew *then* there was some mystery. I have known it ever since. Let me accept it for its worst—and suppose that I have accepted it for its worst. Do not let it trouble you. If it was the darkest crime in the calendar, it has been atoned for and repented of: and so, dearest husband, dismiss it—put it far away from you, as I have done, and let it not trouble us more."

He looked at her with a sort of transport of affection! caught her hand and kissed it softly—"Oh! you have taken from me the weariest load. For years, and for these last days especially, all

this has been before me. For I felt I *must* make open confession and relieve my weary soul. Now, indeed, I am at *rest*. From the beginning to the end, from the first moment I knew you and saw you, —your name is to be associated with peace."

He was growing weary, and she was just rising—as she always did on such symptoms—to leave him to rest a little, when, as she turned, she saw a shadow pass across the window, between her and the golden ribbon of orange that spread across the sky. The shadow was the figures of two men, who had come up the little walk. She now heard their steps and their voices in the hall. An indefinable dread came over her—she knew not why—perhaps from her old associations in the Tilney days, of that visit of "men" on the day of the Tilney party. She passed out softly to meet them. As she saw them, she gave a half-cry: that fiery face and wild eyes were known to her in a second.

"This is fine work," he said in an excited voice, "nice,—to keep me hunting you over the country up and down, and no account of you!"

"Hush!" she said, in an agony of terror, pointing to the door; "he is ill, he is dying; they only told us so to-day; go, go away; go away at once."

"Fine story," said Eastwood contemptuously; "*I* know—quite understand that sort of thing. If he is in there," he added, raising his voice, "so much the better; no fooling with me. Do you know how you have been treating me, leaving me up there without a penny, without a sixpence? I might have starved, for all *you* cared. But see here, I want no hushing up or keeping quiet. I want an open, straightforward settlement. I have done nothing to be ashamed of, that I am to be working underground in this way. Here, Mrs. Tillotson, let me see this sham-sick man of yours. *He'll* understand me,—never fear."

But she stood between him and the door, with her hand on the handle. "You *must* not," she said firmly; "I tell you he is dying. Mr. Grainger, Mr. Grainger! *you* will help me here, and protect us from this *cruel* intrusion."

Mr. Grainger only shrugged his shoulders. "I am powerless here, Mrs. Tillotson; you have no claim on me, either."

"Take care she doesn't pack *you* out of the country, as she managed with that poor devil Ross. That was a nice exploit! No, no; the days of humbugging are over."

"What *shall* I do!" said she, clinging to the door. "I tell you you will kill him if you disturb him now. How ungenerous of *you*, how ignoble! Oh! is there any one to help me?"

There was. For it fortunately came to pass that our Captain, after being tolerably weary with his "nursing" during the day, had gone out for "a puff of air" in the evening, just to refresh himself, lounging about the common for "a short half-hour," was now

coming home. Mrs. Tillotson saw him closing the little gate, and he seemed now to be a true deliverer. "Uncle, uncle dear, help us; quick! There are these people want to force themselves in—and you know——"

She had not left the handle of the door, but called this to him as he came up the little walk.

Shading his eyes with his hand, he recognised "Eastwood, the lad," at once. "Begad, they shall not, my dear," he said, cocking the bishop's hat very fiercely: he had his stout stick too. "Stand back, you pair of blackguards; is that the way to behave to a lady? Take your hat off, Sir, or I'll knock it off for you in two seconds. I know some of your doings before now."

"Pish!" said the other contemptuously; "you old—— I don't mind *you*. I could make the whole set of you change your note in just two minutes; so just be civil, my own old gentleman; this is not the Continent."

"You damned scoundrel!" said the Captain, giving the crown of his bishop's hat a violent bang, "how dare you talk of the Continent? You behaved like a blackleg, as I know you. You did murder there; and if there was law or justice——"

The other interrupted him in a fury.

"Murder, and law, and justice; you'd better not talk of that in this house! We'll see what's to be said about *that;* and you shall hear, too. The time's gone by, old fellow, for huggermuggering. We had enough of that for these fifteen years. We'll see what your sham-sick man in here will say to law, and justice, and murder. Here, I say——"

"For God's sake, no!" said the Captain in a low voice, and completely changing his manner. "Come with me. I tell you the man's dying. You wouldn't do such a thing. He'll hear you. Don't now, for God's sake!"

But the door was now drawn away from *her* hand, and the pale face and tottering figure of Mr. Tillotson stood there looking out on them.

"Let them come in," he said, in a low broken whisper. "It is better to convince them. It is better to have it over. I knew it would come to this before the end came. I was sure of it; and, indeed, it was a fit retribution. I was hoping to have died in peace; but——"

"And have taken this secret to the grave with you, Tillotson? But you brought this all on yourself. If you had behaved open-hand and above-board with me, I should have stood to you, and no one should have known of this business, from *me* at least. A man must live. And recollect it was you who ruined me. I appeal to him here if that's not true. I'd have had an estate now, and been happy and rich, only that my father turned me off, and cut me out all on account of a business of his—a secret."

"It shall be a secret no longer," said Mr. Tillotson. "I tell it here—before all. It is a right humiliation for me."

"Better take care," said the other; "you're not obliged, you know. Think twice."

He took her hand. "I shall leave you no legacy of terrorism. These men shall not have it in their power to persecute you. You have guessed it, indeed, and can think no worse of me. In a word, when I was young I fell into bad ways and bad courses, and was the wildest and most dissipated of my friends—all but broke my poor parents' hearts——"

"Now think twice," said Eastwood. "It's no use, you knew. Stop there; take my advice"

"Twice I broke away from them and outraged them in every way; and twice they forgave. Finally—let me hurry to this—I went to Paris; got into worse company there. I got infatuated with a sort of boyish passion—oh, forgive me this humiliation of you—and was beaten unworthily even in that contest by one older than I was, and whom that moment I hated with a hate that could only be satisfied with blood. But he avoided with a sort of instinct, and at last fled from Paris. But I, urged by some devil"—(Eastwood gave a sort of laugh. "A compliment to me: I was with him!")—pursued him, then got on his track, and at last hunted him down at a little Italian town—Spezia. Ah! you shrink from me, dear."

Up to this point her hand had been in his. He had felt it fluttering and trembling. Now, when he mentioned that Italian name, she started, and half drew it away.

"Nothing, nothing," she said hastily. "Go on."

"Yes," he said, "let me finish. A sentence will do it. That very night, behind the garden of the hotel, *I shot him* in what *was called* a duel, but which was a cruel, unfair, cold-blooded—oh God, God Almighty forgive me! And if a life of suffering and agony of mind and body is some atonement, I hope it will be accepted——"

She had now drawn her hand away, for she was covering her face with both her hands. When he raised his eyes, they fell on her again.

"Yes," he said, "it is right. You *must* shrink from me."

"No, indeed," she said, with a faltering voice; "it is not that."

"It is not that?" he repeated. "No matter. That is not all. He had left a little girl—this murdered man. I know what became of her—a fond darling, that worshipped him. She died of it, they told me. So that also is on my soul——" He stopped, for she had turned away her face. "No wonder!" he said, sadly. "I told you, recollect. So I could not ask her forgiveness. But there may be forgiveness for all three yet."

It had grown darker, and no one spoke. The golden streak had cooled out, and there was now the moon up, and a great waste of

deep, colder blue. He put out his hand. "Ah! she has gone!" he said; "she has left me! I told her and warned her that she would not bear to hear the truth!"

She had, indeed, floated from the room. Could they have seen her a moment later, they would have seen her on her knees, with her face down on a chair, and weeping and praying convulsively. In another moment she rose and dried her eyes, and prepared to return. She lit the lamp and brought it in with her.

When she entered she found the room silent and cleared. They were gone. The Captain had got them away. The dying Mr. Tillotson saw her enter, as he had so often seen her enter, bearing the light—herself soft light. She ran to him, as if answering all the doubt, grief, and pain she saw in that worn face, and put her arms about him.

There was a faint sparkle glittering over in the cathedral, and sounds of music came floating dreamily into the room (for the organist had just gone in to practise). The doubt, the grief, and the pain all passed away in a moment, as if by the touch of an amulet. She heard him whisper, "Ah! you forgive me?"

Then kneeling down beside him, she put her face close, quite close, to his cheek, and forcing those sweet lips into a smile of fervour, she whispered—

"The little girl lives, and from *her heart and soul* forgives!"

He half lifted himself and turned to her. In her face he read all. The light seemed to play on the golden hair as on a glory, and a fuller swell of the organ came sweeping in at the window, almost fluttering the honeysuckle leaves.

L'ENVOI.

We may look back to the personages of this story some five years later. By that time we can see the second Mrs. Tillotson moving in a world of gentle charities and good works, soft, melancholy, practical—with excellent means, too, for her labours; for out of the wreck of the Foncier much had been recovered, and the provident care of Mr. Tillotson had "secured" her, as the world said. But Ross had taken away with him, as perhaps the reader will have anticipated, the fruit of some desperate injury, which his fierce nature and the excitement of that departure had refused to let him yield to. The monotony of the sea had set in; he began to eat his heart out; and only one day after sailing he was found in the morning dead in his

berth—the ship doctor said, "from a suffusion of blood on the brain."

It was wonderful how his strange wild spirit had fought off so long as twenty-four hours the consequences of such internal injuries; but his indomitable pride and energy would not let him "give in," even to sleep. Only that the great enemy stole upon him unawares, he would have fought his last battle with *him*, as he had done so many battles all his life, and have met him standing up, and defiant. Yet he was not wholly bad. Under all the violence and ill-conditioned fury which has marked his nature through the course of this story the reader may have seen a certain "goodness" and fair impulses overpowered by other untrained impulses. His "own fellows" heard of his end with regret—not the worst testimonial to a man's character; and at the mess such epitaphs as, "not a bad fellow at all," "there are worse in the world," "no one's enemy but his own," and "deuced good-hearted after all," went round very freely.

His unfortunate end pointed many a moral—in Mr. Tilney's mouth. Friends that did not know his good heart so well as those who have been listening to him so patiently throughout these pages might go so far as to say that he actually *enjoyed* the fate of his kinsman. He revelled in the details; which he unfolded again and again in his club. For the bounty of his ward now helped him to many more luxuries besides a club; and in the evening of his life he was known to come back again to his older and kindlier view of a late royal "Dook," and of the court generally. But the example of Ross was turned to exceeding profit. "My young friend, ah! I could tell you of a momentous case—out of my own family. As fine a young man as you ever saw. Made to be about a court, but self-willed. My dear friend, there's not a sparrow falls, not a drop leaves the house-top, without an All seeing Eye." In this religious tone of resignation it may be supposed that he accepted his own lot unrepiningly. For things at home were grown very uncomfortable, owing, perhaps, to what one of the Foncier clerks would have called "a tightness" in the nuptial market. The securities were "offered freely;" but, alas! there were no buyers. A fretfulness, a repining, a *snappishness*, had set in, which rendered the domestic hearth unpleasant for Mr. Tilney. Most unreasonable treatment; for he had laboured with the others in the heats—and the failure was not on his head.

No such trouble clouded the days of the Captain, with whom the writer is as loth to part as he was with the original true heart, of which the character given in these pages is but a faint sketch. Still can we see him and think of him in his old faithful round; not growing dull and insensible, and possibly selfish—which is but the nature of age—but rather more delicately sensitive to the wants and feelings of others. We can look back, and see him, in his little measured

and orderly round of duties, going forth at the fixed hour, bright and brushed, and with the shovel-hat all but cocked; or, busy with his tools, repairing; or, busier still, in his dressing-gown, with the moderator drawn close, and the glasses on the high Roman nose, and the thin lips repeating earnestly, and with a respect almost devotional, the words of THADDEUS OF WARSAW; or, better still, we might sit by him and hear him read aloud his daily paper, which he would do when pressed, and which he did with a certain pleasant laboriousness, setting off the strange facts which the daily papers do sometimes contain with simple and delightful comment, such as: "My God!—see that, now! Was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The creature!—and her child with her too! That seems hard on her—now, doesn't it? Egad, Mr. Magistrate, you went too far that time." Or again, "'Coming round the corner, the horse slipped, and fell.' Many's the time that's happened to me. He should have kept his head well up, and slackened a little, my dear." Or we can see him standing up in the frock, much stooped, for he suffered more than he ever admitted with what he called the leg, but which was the hip properly; and feeling nervously at the little crimson-silk purse, the friend that he was always ready to call on. The image of that genial, amiable figure I could wish to be the last image on the reader's mind as he lays down this volume; and the last words written here shall be the name of CAPTAIN DIAMOND.

THE END.

10—3—75. Printed by W. H. Smith & Son, 186, Strand, London.